STERANKO

the steranko history of comics

Dedicated to

JACK KIRBY

without whom there may not have been
any comics to write a history about

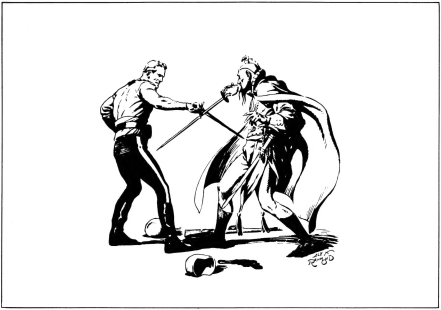
History Of Comics – Volume One ■ Copyright © 1970 by James Steranko

All rights reserved including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission from the author except for brief passages to be used in reviews.

Credit to owners of copyright included with each reproduction. All rights reserved to owner. Prince Valiant copyright © 1970 King Features Syndicate. Scorchy Smith copyright © 1970 AP Newsfeatures. Dick Tracy copyright © 1970 Chicago-Tribune Syndicate. The Phantom copyright © 1970 King Features. Buck Rogers copyright © 1970 National Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. Red Ryder copyright © 1970 NEA Service Inc. Flash Gordon copyright © 1970 King Features Syndicate. Terry and the Pirates copyright © 1970 Chicago-Tribune Syndicate. Steve Canyon copyright © 1970 Field Enterprises. Tarzan copyright © 1970 United Features Syndicate. Shadow, Doc Savage, Avenger, Whisperer, Top-Notch covers and text by permission of the Conde Nast Publications Inc.; Copyright © 1931-1948 by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Spider, Captain Satan, Ace G-Man, Wu Fang, Doctor Yen Sin, G-8, Dusty Ayres, Adventure covers and text copyright © 1933-1947 by Popular Publications. Black Book Detective, The Ghost, Captain Future, Startling Stories covers and text copyright © 1939-1949 by Better Publications Inc. Phantom Detective, Thrilling Wonder Stories covers and text copyright © 1946-1950 by Standard Magazines Inc. Planet Stories covers copyright © 1948-1953 by Love Romances Publishing Co., Inc. Weird Tales covers copyright © 1934-1948 by Popular Fiction Publishing Co. and Weird Tales. Detective Fiction Weekly, Double Detective, Argosy covers copyright © 1938-1939 by Red Star Publishing Co. Super-Science Stories, Black Mask Detective covers and text copyright © 1946-1950 by Fictioneers Inc. Jungle Stories cover copyright © 1951 by Fiction House Publications Inc. Public Enemy cover copyright © 1935 by Dell Publications. Smashing Novels cover copyright © 1936 by Chesterfield Publications. Fantastic Adventures, Amazing Stories covers copyright © 1941-1942 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Co. Amazing Stories cover copyright © 1929 by Experimenter Publishing Co. Science-Adventure Books cover copyright © 1950 by Wings Publishing Co. Inc. Future Science Fiction cover copyright © 1950 by Columbia Publications Inc. Secret Agent X cover and text copyright © 1934 by Periodical Publications. Gladiator copyright © 1930 by Philip Wylie. The content of Action, Adventure, Batman, Boy Commandos, Detective, Leading, More Fun, Star-Spangled, Superman, World's Fair, World's Finest, All-American, All-Flash, All-Star, Comic Cavalcade, Flash, Green Lantern, Sensation, Wonder Woman covers and text copyright © 1938-1951 by National Periodicals Publications, Inc. Captain America, Marvel Mystery, Human Torch, All-Winners, All-Select, Daring, Mystic, Red Raven, Kid Komics, Miss America, USA, Young Allies, Tough Kid Squad, Blonde Phantom, covers and text copyright © 1939-1949 by Magazine Management Co., Inc., Marvel Comics Group. Speed Comics, All-New covers and text copyright © 1944 by Family Comics, Inc. Daredevil cover and text copyright © 1947 by Lev Gleason Publications, Inc. Boy Explorers cover and text copyright © 1946 by Harvey Publications.

SUPERGRAPHICS

A SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLICATION
501 SPRUCE STREET READING/PENNSYLVANIA · 19602



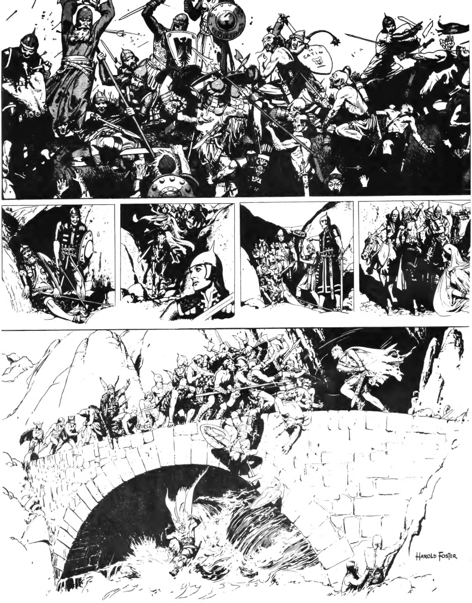
I began to understand the essence of comics when I was a child by reading the strips of Frederick Burr Opper and George McManus: *Happy Hooligan, Maud, Alphonse & Gaston* and *Bringing Up Father.* In Italy, then, we published comics without balloons; substituting a kind of limerick underneath, like captions, not always complete for we know that rhyme drags along. There was absent, afterall, one fundamental element of the composition; the text was excluded from the image, from becoming part of the image, image itself, but the exemplary impact of that ingenious and refined art was so imposing that it furnished the key with which to view the world.

Then we had the discovery of adventure in comics. It is difficult to have people understand the influence these have had in Italy for the children of my generation, such comics as *Flash Gordon* by Alexander Raymond. When the gallant vicissitudes of the heroes began to gain in popularity, Italy was navigating in full Fascism, in full lugubrious and repressive rhetoric. Fascism, it is true, relied on boldness, on the necessity to dare, fight and win, but these were only fastidious words, and those who proclaimed such virtues were not really appealing. *Flash Gordon,* instead, appeared instantly as a model of a hero insuperable, a real hero, even if his achievements were in remote and fantastic worlds. I had a profound affection for *Flash Gordon* and his creator, along with those of my age group. When I think of it, it seems as though he actually existed. At times in my films, I seek to find the color and verve of *Flash Gordon* and his world, like that which the Italian newspapers printed with the balloons finally in their places, but with some errors in translation. For example, *Flash Gordon* in the original version that first Sunday installment of 1934, was presented as a "Yale Graduate" and in the Italian version was characterized as a "police officer." The error was rectified only recently and, I think, this presents a rather substantial difference.

I extend these lines, not to talk about me personally, not to risk an ulterior accusation of autobiography, but simply to testify my interest and gratitude for the comics. Interest and gratitude which causes me to appreciate particularly this book by James Steranko that contains, along with the history of the heroes, the history of the authors of the comics—of Alex Raymond and Will Eisner, of Milt Caniff and Hal Foster—to Stan Lee and his revolutionary thoughts on the subject. The revolution he created has given an exceptionally adventurous bent to comics, really the capturing of the essence of the other thread, that of the purely comic.

Not satisfied being heroes, but becoming even more heroic, the characters in the group Marvel know how to laugh at themselves. Their adventures are offered publicly like a larger than life spectacle, each searching masochistically within themselves to find a sort of maturity, yet the results are nothing to be avoided: it is a brilliant tale, aggressive and retaliatory, a tale that continues to be reborn for eternity, without fear of obstacles or paradoxes. We cannot die from obstacles and paradoxes, if we face them with laughter. Only of boredom might we perish. And from boredom, fortunately, the comics keep distance.

Federico Fellini


DE GATIN
HAROLD FOSTER

COMING ATTRACTIONS

The dream was always there.

For an untold millennium the world lay infinitely silent under a crystalline mantle of ice. Then, between 40,000 and 5,000 B.C., the frozen glaciers began to recede across Europe. As the ice age thawed, so did the imagination of man. With the end of a chewed twig, the first prehistoric artisan daubed a cold stone edifice with earthy pigment in the profiled form of a six-legged bison. The critics hated it, but the spectators in the bleachers knew it was a kind of visual shorthand that indicated motion. Graphic communication had begun.

Cavemen considered the drawings magical and killed the beasts in effigy by ceremonially painting in spears and pointed shafts. The cult of primordial hunters felt the ritual gave them tribal power over the huge animals. They exaggerated the bulk and power of the mammoth beasts, mythically stressing the danger of the hunt, turning desperation into inspiration. In their own way they had told the first story, and storytelling is what comics are all about.

The Egyptians made considerably more progress. In 2700 B.C. they began to erect gigantic pyramids almost 500 feet high. Hundreds of years earlier they had evolved the first written language, hieroglyphics, an ordered form of readable pictures. Their art developed along the same conceptual lines: drawings were based on ideas rather than literal physical translations.

Egyptian artists created the concept of continuity by grouping pictures into a series of compositions. Blocks of writing accompanied the illustrations in a manner identical to the balloons in today's comics. Complex wall paintings and reliefs dramatically narrated the preparation of a lifeless pharaoh's body and the perilous journey of his soul through the shadow world of death and the afterlife.

Bayblonian art and sculpture in the form of complex wall reliefs depicted tales of the invincible Gilgamesh as he conquered monsters and descended into the Netherworld. Assyrian sculptors endowed winged bulls with five legs so that they would look realistic when viewed from either front or side. Ornate bas-reliefs rich with naturalistic detail told of ceremonial court scenes, lions hunts and extensive battle extravaganzas complete with mounted bowmen, armed footsoldiers and majestic charioteers. A fantastic beastiary of elephants, tigers, buffaloes and strange amalgams of beast/bird/human beings appeared in their art.

The Greeks were responsible for the next step in the development of art. Now the human figure became the object of considerable attention. They began by tracing the shadow of a man with an outline and filling it in with a single color using a brush, an implement they had invented for that purpose.

In about 550 B.C. the concept of pictorial matter as a personal statement was publicly accepted, the emphasis still being on the narrative element. The refinement of the human figure resulted in a wave of mythological treatments about legendary Greek heroes Ajax, Achilles, and Theseus and the Minotaur. Later, the homeric epic of Ulysses became the favorite theme. Zeus, Hades, Heracles, Hermes and a host of other gods were portrayed in profusion by Greek artists.

Then, in 300 B.C., the Romans conquered the Greeks, took over their gods and worshipped them under Roman names. Zeus became Jupiter; Hera was now called Juno. Poseidon, Ares and Aphrodite were called Neptune, Mars and Venus by Roman artisans who dotted the earth with temples and tributes to them. Next, the wit and insight of Roman philosophers gave birth to the satiric cartoon which enjoyed considerable popularity among the upper classes.

Centuries later the Viking legend of Sigurd Of The Volsungs and Beowulf and his epic combat with the fiery dragon Fafnir was told in intricately woven tapestries and illuminated manuscripts. The art of graphic interpretation became a highly developed craft and visual storytelling a universal language.

The art of the pictorial narrative is, in fact, the original art form. Painting, sculpture and their analogous crafts are all offspring of the narrative work. Today, visual narratives are called comics.

The first form of the mass-produced comic book appeared in England in the 1600's and depicted the antics of puppet show characters Punch and Judy. Philadelphian Ben Franklin used editorial cartoons a hundred years later to rally the 13 American colonies for freedom. Woodcut cartoons in his newspaper *Gazette* were the first to carry legitimate balloons.

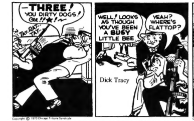
By the early 1800's comic books that presented the satiric adventures of DR. SYNTAX found public acclaim.

Scorned by a Victorian notion that anything of value must present a literary obstacle to be overcome, visual storytelling was deemed fit only for the commoner. So the common man adopted and found it a home in his daily newspaper. *Yankee Doodle,* the first comic weekly, was published in New York and, by the end of the century, the *New York Journal* had initiated an 8 page full color comic section that included the KATZENJAMMER KIDS. The comic strip was born.

Humor, being the most universal of qualities, was the natural route for the new format to take. A profusion of funnies like Richard Outcault's YELLOW KID, Fred Opper's HAPPY HOOLIGAN and ALPHONSE & GASTON and Bud Fisher's MUTT AND JEFF found their way into print.

In 1905 the fantastic became commonplace, the dream a reality. Illustrator Windsor McCay created the ultimate imaginative effort, LITTLE NEMO IN SLUMBERLAND. The elements of time and space were juggled with dazzling dexterity but then dreams will tend to ignore the laws of physics. McCay's strip was a masterpiece of innovative magic, played against lush backgrounds of Byzantine architecture in offbeat perspectives. He was the first to utilize color for pure psychological effect. Nemo would awake in the last panel of his full page slumber to discover the spectacle of clowns, circuses, gladiators, animals, airships and parades of pageantry to be just a dream. Forty years later, McCay's son Robert (the real little Nemo) would ink stories for the comic books.

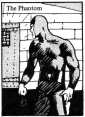
The irrepressible KRAZY KAT appeared in a handful of strips before the cat-and-mouse-game was finally played



—THREE!
YOU DIRTY DOGS! Grr!!★!~
TAT-RAT-TAT-
WELL! LOOKS AS THOUGH YOU'VE BEEN A BUSY LITTLE BEE.
YEAH? WHERE'S FLATTOP?

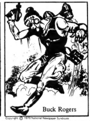
Dick Tracy

Copyright © 1970 Chicago Tribune Syndicate



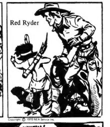
The Phantom

Copyright © 1970 King Features Syndicate



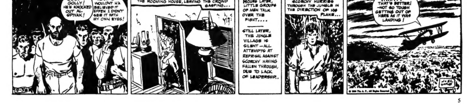
Buck Rogers

Copyright © 1970 National Newspaper Syndicate

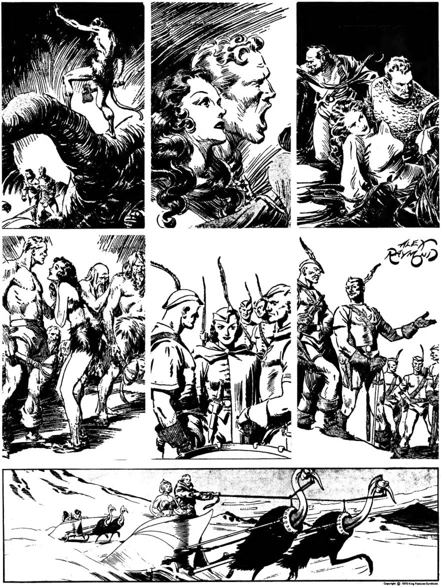


Red Ryder

Copyright © 1970 NEA Service Inc.



GOOD GOLLY! HE'S KNOCKED OUT AL SPIVAK!
YEAH—I WOULDN'T H'A BELIEVED IT EFFEN I DIDN'T SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES!
TURNING QUICKLY AROUND, SCORCHY ENTERS THE ROOMING HOUSE, LEAVING THE CROWD GASPING...
HOURS LATER, LITTLE GROUPS OF MEN TALK OVER THE FIGHT....
STILL LATER, THE JUNGLE VILLAGE IS SILENT—ALL ATTEMPTS AT REPRISAL AGAINST SCORCHY HAVING FALLEN THROUGH, DUE TO LACK OF LEADERSHIP..
DAWN, NEXT MORNING: SCORCHY HURRIES THROUGH THE JUNGLE IN THE DIRECTION OF HIS PLANE...
WHEW! THAT'S BETTER! —NOT SO TOUGH GETTING OUT OF HERE AS IT WAS LANDING!


ALEX RAYMOND

Copyright © 1970 King Features Syndicate

as a regular feature in 1910. George McManus' ***Bringing Up Father*** (MAGGIE AND JIGGS) bowed 2 years later to be followed by THE GUMPS, BARNEY GOOGLE and his hoss Spark Plug, and Elzie Segar's *Thimble Theatre* that would later star the corncob pipe-chewing POPEYE. Harold Gray premiered LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE in 1924; Brandon Walsh countered with LITTLE ANNIE ROONEY 3 years later. In 1928, Walt Disney's *Steamboat Willie*, the first MICKEY MOUSE sound cartoon, made a sensation. His comic strip followed soon afterward.

It was the age of radio. By 1922, there were 220 radio stations on the air. A few years earlier no one ever heard of a radio station. The horse and buggy gave way to the mechanical traffic jam. Ten million cars were on the road. Small town Michigan tinkerer, Henry Ford, became a billionaire. It was an era of bathing beauties, marathon dancing, crossword puzzle books, Dempsey-Tunney fights, Babe Ruth, Harding, Coolidge, Capone and jazz. Edison's kinetoscope gave birth to the films of Griffith, Chaplin and DeMille. The movies had arrived.

Then, on Friday, October 29, 1929, the financial structure of the nation collapsed. Jokes weren't quite as funny. People needed more than a laugh; they needed a way out. Necessity again proved the mother of invention. Adventure strips were born out of depression – the depression of the 30's. And in the wake of the depression came a tidal wave of creativity.

TARZAN OF THE APES, who killed his first lion in the pulps, now found himself stalking jungle prey, man and beast, in the comics. Joseph Neebe had contacted Edgar Rice Burroughs with the idea of using the character for a newspaper strip. The result was a 10 week test sequence that began on January 7, 1929. Each installment ran 5 panels a day with about 100 words to a panel. Tarzan's success was phenomenal. Readers demanded more.

Much of the strip's popularity must be attributed to the artist who until that time was a commercial illustrator. He has since become the father of the adventure strip, the D. W. Griffith of comics, the incomparable Hal Foster.

Born in Nova Scotia on August 16, 1892, Foster spent his early years developing his skills as a fur trapper, fisherman and hunter in the forests and streams around Halifax. At 14 he moved to Winnipeg where he sold newspapers and even tried his hand at professional boxing. Later, verbal bouts with an office manager ended any thoughts he had about a business career.

About this time Foster met and married a lovely blonde whom he promptly wisked north to Ontario and Manitoba. Utilizing his ability as an expert woodsman, he decided to try his luck as a gold prospector. In 1917, as the story goes, he found a million dollar claim only to have it "jumped" a few years later.

Now 29, Foster resolved to change his tactics. He had always had a way with a pencil; perhaps the art field would pan out for him. In 1921 he bicycled to Chicago and enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago, Academy Of Fine Arts and the National Academy. He became a naturalized citizen and finally settled down to facing life as an illustrator. As his natural talent grew, Foster and his family, that now included two sons, were soon enjoying a comfortable living.

Amid assignments that included covers for Popular Mechanics, Foster accepted the Tarzan adaptation, handling it with a straight realistic approach far from the usual "big foot" comic style other strips embraced. Surprisingly, the previous work of J. Allen St. John in the book versions seemed to have a minimum of influence on Foster.

Instead, he brought a range of expression to the strip by employing the elements of traditional illustration. Layout, design and composition combined with a remarkable talent for figure drawing made the strip a smash. Grosset and Dunlap reprinted the entire sequence in book form and sold it for fifty cents.

Foster confronted his material directly and evolved an approach that consisted largely of long shots that displayed Tarzan's muscular figure to its best advantage. He had realized the ape man's popularity was rooted in the physical, not the metaphysical. All hero strips would follow an identical approach. Balloons were another matter. Foster dealt with them in his own way. Rather than subject his illustrations to the negative area created by a word balloon, he eliminated it, working the text into an open space somewhere in the panel. The new look was exceptionally tasteful, but taste was a marginal element in the comics where ostentation was the rule.

After the initial 10 week sequence Foster returned to servicing his advertising accounts. Now reinstated, the Tarzan strip showcased the work of Rex Maxon who had neither Foster's talent for composition nor visual textures. Fortunately, United Features decided to add a Sunday page to the Tarzan saga, and Maxon was unable to handle the additional work. Foster was again commissioned for the job, the first page of which appeared September 27, 1931. He would continue on it for almost six more years.

It was a rare coincidence indeed that another strip of equal importance premiered on precisely the same day of Tarzan's initial appearance. The fact that they were thematically in opposition merely makes the point more interesting. While one strip was predicated upon an environment of primeval wilderness, the other rocketed into the machine-dominated future of the 25th century.

BUCK ROGERS officially signaled the coming of the atomic age. The works of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells existed then of course, but it was the comic strip that did the most to inform the sensibilities of the public about the shape of things to come. Buck Rogers was a world-shaking excursion into bravura fantasy, the archetype from which others would draw to fabricate their own success.

Buck Rogers and Wilma Deering played the lead roles and were supported by the Einsteinish Dr. Huer, foremost scientist of the 25th century (he would lose his hair over the years). They played a running game of galactic cops-and-robbers with futuristic baddies like Killer Kane, his woman companion Ardala and space pirate, Black Barney.

The idea for a comic strip that portrayed the world and the worlds of the future was conceived by John Flint Dille, president of the National Newspaper Syndicate. Impressed by the science fiction pulps of the day, Dille envisioned their potential in a series of continuities. He contacted pulp writer Philip Nowlan who adapted his highly romantized tales from the pages of *Amazing Stories* into strip form. Loosely based on *Armageddon 2419 A.D.*, Nowlan's script had the hero, a World War I pilot, become the victim of a 500-year state of suspended animation. He awakes in 2430 to discover the Red Mongols have conquered America. At Dille's suggestion, Nowlan had changed the hero's name from Anthony Rogers to Buck Rogers.

The strip was drawn by Dick Calkins, an ex-lieutenant and WWI pilot. Calkins worked on the syndicate staff and had been trying to convince Dille to let him produce a strip based on cavemen and prehistoric monsters (the strip would undoubtedly have been a hit). At Dille's persistence he decided to try the script Nowlan had submitted.

Calkins' style lacked the beauty and grace of Foster's work. He obsessively cluttered any open area in the panel with stratum of pen lines that gave the strip a claustrophobic effect. Calkins' technique of over-rendering attempted to cover any deficiencies in the drawings. Somehow he made everyone look like the victim of an adenoid condition. The graphics were as unimaginative as the scripts were imaginative. Still it had a naive, primitive charm that was more elaborate than expressive. The art was secondary to the concepts presented: space ships, gravity beams, disintegrator rays, flying belts and intergalatic travel. Spacers like the Martian-Venusian Triblast Special No. DT 12-MC 11 were rococo impossibilities as amusing today as they were astoundingly inspirational then.

Calkins' style and mechanical design was based on the technology of the times. Rockets looked like they were propelled by gear-driven arrangements. Unfortunately, his style never improved over the years; the Buck Rogers of the 20's was identical to the Buck Rogers of the 40's. If anyone had noticed, they didn't care. At that moment there was nothing with which to make comparisons.

The public was brought down to earth again in October 1931 by the explosive chatter of a killer's machine gun and the screaming tires of his getaway car. Somebody had to prove out the old axiom that crime does not pay. DICK TRACY was that man.

Tracy hit the comic reading public with the impact of a Chicago gang war, the source that initially inspired his creation. Previously any violence that appeared in the pages of the funnies took the form of slapstick not sadism. Tracy changed all that as he routed murderers and racketeers with grim determination. The result was blood. Plenty of it!

Readers were shocked. But they accepted it as they would later accept Spillane's MIKE HAMMER. Capone and his army of bootleggers were heroes to the alcohol consuming public. Prohibition, crime and cops "on the take" were everyday headlines. But Tracy was different; he was incorruptible. He was on our side. He answered bribes with bullets.

Tracy was more than the first police strip. He was one of the first to deal directly with the current American scene. Others dealt with humor or fantasy, but Tracy existed in the "today" of 1931. His stark realism thrust him immediately into the "best seller" list of comics. The realism, of course, was in its content, not its pictorialization. The art was strictly middle-class cartoon style, yet it embodied a compelling fatalism no artist has captured since.

Tracy's creator Chester Gould has earned a revered place as one of America's greatest comic strip authors. Born in Pawnee, Oklahoma in 1900, Gould's artistic style was set by a $20 - twenty lesson mail order course from the W. L. Evans School of Cartooning. He apprenticed at a handful of newspapers, mostly in the Chicago area, and graduated from Northwestern University. His father had encouraged him to be a lawyer, but Gould had long since set his mind to a career as a cartoonist. *"I was consumed by an ambition to be a comic-strip man."*

By the age of 31 he had a wife, 2 children and was making $55 a week. In his own words, *"Chet Gould, the Oklahoma Flash, was a flop!"* Then came the inspiration, in 90 point type across the front page. *"Everybody was worked up about the hell Chicago gangsters were raising. One day I told myself, 'I'm going to draw a guy who'll go out and shoot those——!' So I drew six strips about a detective named Plainclothes Tracy, a real rugged guy."*

He submitted the samples to Captain Joseph Patterson, head of the *Chicago*

Tribune, just as he had done with a dozen other strips in the past. Three months later he received a telegram saying the Syndicate was interested. Gould dropped everything, spent his bankroll on a new suit and went for an interview. Patterson greeted him in shirt sleeves, without a tie, and laid his proposition on the line without ever noticing Gould's new suit.

"The strip has possibilities, son!" He pointed to Gould's one week of continuities that lay scattered across his desk. *"But that name Plainclothes Tracy, it's too long. How about Jack Tracy, no...Frank...Dick? That's it! People call cops 'Dicks,' don't they? Call him Dick Tracy. Get started right away. You're hired!"*

Gould's lifelong ambition was finally realized. With Patterson coaching him on the finer points of storytelling, he completed the first 36 strips in two sleepless weeks of work. The rest is history. Readership grew to a record high of one hundred million. Everybody read Tracy, from paupers to presidents. Occasionally Franklin Delano Roosevelt was unable to endure the suspense while waiting for the solution to Tracy's dilemma. When the burden was too great, he'd call the Syndicate for the answer. Who said Crime Doesn't Pay?

As an artist, Gould is one of a kind. Comic art at best is a semi-real art. Black outlines that run around the edges of faces, figures and objects are only devices to give the illusion of the real. There are no black lines in nature. Gould's severe linear style widened the gap even more. His drawings had about as much depth as a cardboard cut-out. As a technician, he would be outdistanced by miles. If Gould had any knowledge of perspective he kept it to himself. His strength was in his scripts and their content. Few would ever match him.

Gould's crime documentary created a macabre mythology of tough villains like Pruneface, Itchy, B-B Eyes, Mumbles, Flyface, Blowtop, Littleface, Shakey, The Mole and 88 Keys. Their deaths were always as bizarre as their physical appearances. Shoulders accidentally shot himself while trapped in an antique shop. The murderous Midget was scalded to death in a Turkish bath. Laffy, nicknamed because he found crime amusing, cut himself on a can of chloroform and developed a fatal case of lockjaw. The Brow met his doom by being impaled on a flagpole. Tracy's greatest adversary, the sleepy-eyed Flattop, got wedged between underwater pilings and drowned. Tracy was stabbed, clubbed, choked, hacked, burned, frozen and shot, but he endured. They were tough, but he was T-O-U-G-H!

Tracy stories are essentially morality plays telling the elemental conflict between good and evil with gunplay, fingerprints and police sirens tossed in for good measure. The strip's almost abstract two-dimensionality represents an intelligent comment on the brutal amorality of crime.

An extremely clever writer, Gould told a continuous story daily and Sunday. Yet if you missed either it still made sense. I was about six years old during the Flattop sequence and remember it vividly. My family got the *New York Sunday News;* we couldn't afford a daily paper. Tracy ran on the front page of the tabloid section (and still does), and somehow I had hustled first rights to the funnies. A few years later I got an official Dick Tracy hat (pooltable green and with a black band) that I proudly wore only to church. As you may have guessed, Tracy was my hero.

Calkins' idea of a caveman in the comics was rediscovered in 1934 by amateur paleontologist Vince Hamlin in his strip ALLEY OOP. Built like a primeval Popeye with a head like a carved coconut, the impetuous Neanderthal presided over a parade of prehistoria that included his sultry cavemate Oola, King Guzzle the ruler of ancient Moo, Dinny the dinosaur, and Doc Wonmug whose time machine tamperings sent the characters careening into the ages past, from Cleopatra to the crusades.

But Oop didn't have the patent on time machines. The previous year had introduced flying adventurer BRICK BRADFORD. Clarence Grey's art and William Ritt's script soon furnished a towering Time Top which Bradford manned into historical forays not only to the past but the future also.

1934 was a premium year in comics. The irrepressible Al Capp started LIL' ABNER on his way. Lee Falk authored the archetype of all magical strips, MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN. Created in the image of stage illusionists Keller, Thurston and Blackstone, the comic Cagliostro sported the usual top hat and tails, inverness opera cape and cane. Assisted by his giant African aide Lothar, Mandrake foiled evildoers with real magic that would soon give way to hypnotic hocus-pocus. Early tales in circuses and other exotic settings were beautifully drawn by Phil Davis.

In January of that year, the *ne plus ultra* of science fiction strips began. Like a blond adonis, FLASH GORDON blasted his way through an army of fantastic antagonists. The opening sequence declared the world was coming to an end and built from there. It explained a strange new planet was on a collision course with Earth which had only a few weeks left to exist. Scientists were working on the crisis, including Dr. Hans Zarkov whose sanity was dangerously close to madness.

Meanwhile, a passenger plane winged its way across the continent carrying a famous *"polo player and Yale graduate,"* Flash Gordon. His traveling companion as you may have guessed, was beautiful Dale Arden. Without warning, a meteor blazes out of the darkness and shears off the plane's wing. Flash grabs a parachute and bails out, taking the girl with him. True to comic coincidence, they land at Zarkov's observatory and discover his homemade rocket. Suspecting them to be spies, Zarkov forces them into the ship's hold and blasts off. His plan: to deflect the approaching planet by crashing headlong into it. At the last moment he falters, and the ship misses only to be dragged into the sphere's gravitational pull and collides with its rocky terrain. The trio had landed on the planet Mongo.

After that came an endless procession of spectacular adventures in which the three Earthlings were aided and abetted by a score of monarchs, monsters and maidens including Princess Aura, King Kala, Queen Fria, Prince Thun, King Vultan, Prince Barin, Captain Khan, Count Corro, Queen Azura and, reigning over them all, Ming the Merciless. Royalty was everywhere, commoners were uncommon.

Flash and his companions were continually plagued by Hawkmen, Monkeymen, Lizardmen, Panthermen, Sharkmen, Lionmen and a host of other mutantmen too numerable to mention. Mongo was populated by civilizations of inhumans, all of whom seemed to be at war with each other. Flash chose sides in the *Tournaments of Mongo,* aided the *Powermen Of Mongo,* battled the *Witch Queen of Mongo,* stalked through the *Jungles Of Mongo* and became the ultimate statement of high fantasy in the comics.

The man behind Flash was the inimitable Alex Raymond, who was born in New Rochelle, New York on October 2, 1909. At age 12, the untimely death of his father threw young Alex into a rigorous program of athletic achievement culminating in a scholarship to Iona Prep. He turned down another scholarship to Notre Dame to enter the business world as a Wall Street order clerk. The stockmarket crash in 1929 cut his career short.

Raymond recalled his father's encouragement and advice and enrolled in the Grand Central School of Art. Then Russ Westover offered Alex a job assisting on his strip TILLIE THE TOILER. Raymond subsequently aided Chic Young on BLONDIE (the world's most popular strip) and Lyman Young on TIM TYLER'S LUCK, finally taking a staff job at King Features Syndicate. He bypassed the traditional comic style by studying the works of illustrators like Charles Dana Gibson, Matt Clark and John Lagatta. His repository of technique had grown to impressive proportions and when the Syndicate offered SECRET AGENT X-9 to counter Dick Tracy's success, Raymond got the job.

King had enlisted the services of pioneer crime novelist Dashiell Hammett to insure X-9's success. Raymond matched the scripts with skillfully polished and intelligently rendered art, then, through a staff contest, presented King with JUNGLE JIM and FLASH GORDON.

Elementally, both strips were identical. "Jungle" Jim Bradley was a globe trotting soldier of fortune like H. Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain. Jim, like Flash, was flanked by a brace of companions, the lush and captivating Lil and the Hindu strongman Kolu. Though both actually took place in the present, they epitomized future and past separately. King bought both.

Raymond dropped the daily X-9 strip a year and a half later to concentrate entirely on the other two, which combined to make a complete Sunday page. His efforts brought the craft of visual illustration to a new level. Raymond established himself as the first in the modern school of comic artists. His early style was typified by bold, sweeping brushstrokes and swirling organic masses. The strip was an amalgam of rich, vital textures that caught the reader in its purity of movement.

By 1936 Raymond's style changed to one of precision and judicious control, a style that would emerge as a "classic" among classics. He developed the technique of "feathering" (a series of fine lines to soften an edge or create a contour) to its highest degree. His preoccupation with the human figure was evident in every panel. Stories were told basically in long and medium shots that were built around compositions of figures.

Foster, who until then had a monopoly in the comic illustration world, now found himself sharing the spotlight with Raymond. While their common denominator was an unquestionable quality of excellence in craftsmanship, their points of view differed with equal strength. Raymond glorified the beauty and grace of human things in his subject matter. Flash rocketed through a universe populated with flawlessly formed men and women with stars in their eyes and ideals in their hearts. Raymond's was a dream world. No woman could ever have the immaculate perfection Dale projected; no man was ever as handsome or heroic as Flash.

Foster characterized the opposite approach; he drew real people with human emotions. Foster's cast was flesh and blood. His people conceiveably had dirt beneath their fingernails and perhaps even cavities in their teeth, if they had teeth. Flash couldn't get a cavity if he tried. Foster's focus of attention was frequently unexpected; his draftsmanship was never allowed to overpower the subject matter. His regard for character detail was critical, Raymond's was often gratuitous. To Foster there was no such thing as an unimportant character. He applied the aspect of Mannerism found in Renaissance paintings to the comic page.

There were other differences too.

Foster's development reached a certain point and leveled off to a thoroughly consistant output. But Raymond was an experimenter. He initially handled the element of dialogue in rectangular balloons. Then considering them too obtrusive, he eliminated the balloon and "floated" the dialogue in an open area, indicating the speaker with a line for a pointer. His aesthetic sense was still disturbed causing him to combine the dialogue with the narrative, completely separate from the illustration.

Raymond's landscapes were filled with flowing flora and fauna, giant mushrooms and massive leaves. His cities were streamlined structures of domes and spires. The costumes of his characters were generally semi-militaristic, but always with boots and belts. Flash Gordon was another version of Burrough's **JOHN CARTER**, an Earthman in a world where a warrior's inscrutable logic had him use knives and swords when ray guns were just as handy, or somehow prefer animal transportation to rockets. The reason, of course, was obvious. It was more fun that way.

Flash's success heralded a profusion of by-products. The Whitman Publishing Co. released a flood of Big Little Books featuring his adventures. Pop-up books, coloring books, a pulp magazine, a weekly radio show and a cluster of toys followed. Meanwhile Raymond contributed dozens of illustrations to *Collier's, Blue Book, Esquire* and other leading magazines of the day in addition to an estimable amount of advertising and commercial assignments.

In 1944 Raymond joined the Marines, his inker Austin Briggs filling in on Flash. When Raymond returned in 1946 with the rank of Major, he was ready with a new strip in a new style. He proposed the idea of an intellectual crime strip. **RIP KIRBY**, cerebral and sophisticated private cop, came complete with horn-rimmed glasses and pipe. A matching technique employed the use of a crisp, flexible line. Feathering was out. Bold black brush strokes played in rhythms against tight, resilient pen lines. Compositions were never better. Raymond's genius set another pace that still exists today. Then, on September 6, 1956, he was involved in a fatal accident near his home in Westport, Connecticut. His work is his legacy; his talent, irreplaceable.

Like other outstanding comic greats, Raymond wrote, drew and colored his work, achieving an unusual clarity of theme in the most imaginative of frameworks. Most comic art becomes dated after a decade but, after almost 40 years, Raymond's work continues to educate. He remains to be one of the most influential and most imitated artists in the business.

Before 1934 was over another milestone adventure strip took its place in the history of comics. October 19 marked the debut of **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**. Few strips have had as much going for them: juvenile appeal, humor, exotic locale, plenty of action, and that classic favorite, sex appeal. There was one thing more, Milton Caniff.

Born in Hillsboro, Ohio on February 28, 1907, Caniff grew up with the idea of being an actor. His first job however was slightly less exciting, office boy at the *Dayton Journal*. That led to positions on the art staffs of a half dozen newspapers, even while he attended Ohio State University. In 1930 Caniff graduated and got married a few months afterward. Though he had developed into an adequate actor during his college years, this new turn of events called for something more secure.

To make matters worse, Caniff was fired from his staff job when the depression hit. He decided to open a commercial art studio and teamed with another artist, Noel Sickles. After a few months of starvation, Caniff got an offer from the Associated Press who had seen some of his work and liked it.

He took the job and went to New York. Before long he had a syndicated cartoon panel called the **GAY THIRTIES**, then his first strip, **DICKIE DARE**. Dickie's early tales involved him in imaginary historical situations rather like Little Nemo. Caniff's style was essentially one of simple outlines in the tradition of early comics, not too different from dozens of others at the time. What was noticeable, however, was his flair for adventure storytelling.

For the next few years, Caniff continued to polish his drawing ability and his approach to continuity. Then, in early 1934, Captain Patterson of the Tribune-News Syndicate offered Caniff the chance to do another strip, something to compete with Tarzan and Flash Gordon—a strip of high adventure but one that had credibility.

They decided to use a pair of heroes: an adult for the grown-ups, and his young sidekick for the kids. But what would they do? **TAILSPIN TOMMY, SMILIN' JACK, BARNEY BAXTER** and **SCORCHY SMITH** had the airplane market cornered. **RADIO PATROL** and **RED BARRY** handled the criminal element. **FLASH GORDON** and **BUCK ROGERS** dealt with the fantastic. **TIM TYLER'S LUCK** and **CAPTAIN EASY** were fast-thinking globe-trotting trouble shooters.

Caniff and Patterson took no chances and put them all together. A pair of worldly adventurers fighting crime in an exotic atmosphere with planes and boats as background props (the military element would come later). They decided to locate the characters in the Orient, the last outpost for intrigue, danger and mystery, smuggling on a grand scale, even river pirates. How could it miss?

Caniff suggested the name Pat Ryan for the hero and Tommy Tucker for the boy.

Patterson liked the former, rejected the latter. On a list of names Caniff had submitted, Patterson circled Terry and wrote "And The Pirates" afterward. They added Connie, a Chinese number-one-son type for a touch of humor. He was, of course, Caniff's version of The Yellow Kid. But more memorable than all of them put together was Lai Choi San, The Dragon Lady. They saw that there was something for everybody.

Terry Lee would grow to maturity over the next 10 years as would Caniff's technique. Graphically the early Terry was another Dickie, with dots for eyes and a typical button nose. The "classic" Caniff approach was predicated upon a number of influences—that existed concurrently with Terry.

One of those was the work of Roy Crane whose strip **WASH TUBBS** bowed in early 1924. Wash and his rugged pal **CAPTAIN EASY** were about par for the comic character course. Their appeal was in the rendering, a style that utilized punchy blacks, clean simple drawing and exploited the use of interesting shapes and patterns. Crane's use of the Ben Day process (a chemical application that developes two shades of grey on treated drawing paper) was exceptional. Crane switched to a new strip in 1943 called **BUZ SAWYER** and brought the tone technique to perfection. His dimensional effects were unrivaled.

But Caniff's main inspiration was drawn from **SCORCHY SMITH**, drawn by his friend Noel Sickles. In 1934, Sickles took over when John Terry dropped Scorchy. At first he attempted to mimic the style his predecessor had initiated, then proceeded to apply his own approach based on subtle composition and an intellectual Mannerism.

Sickles developed a loose impressionistic treatment of his subject matter. He drew things not as they looked but as they seemed to look. Mouths were straight hard lines. Wrinkles were slashes of black. A profusion of textures played in decorative patterns across neatly paced panels. His style evolved from the habit of copying newspaper photographs in extremely simple black and white terms. A natural but quite unique approach emerged, one that would bring more success to others than to Sickles himself.

For a while Sickles employed the Ben Day effect in his strips with explicit mastery, but his primary contribution was the application and placement of black areas. He would fill in his pencilled panels first with blacks, then work to the light side of the elements depicted. The result was a sensitive and sensible approach that created an entire "school" of comic art.

The Scorchy strip itself never had the popularity of others like Tracy, Tarzan or Terry. One reason was the subject matter; though Scorchy was patterned after aviation hero Charles Lindbergh, he was merely one of a dozen other such adventurers. Another reason is the fact that the strip changed artists so often. Bert Christman followed Sickles, then Howell Dodd, Frank Robbins, Ed Good and finally Rodlow Willard.

Caniff credits Sickles as being one of the best draftsmen in the country. Sickles once "ghosted" Terry for a few months when Caniff was unable to handle it. Those sequences had a particularly influential effect on a pair of beginners, Lee Elias (**BEYOND MARS** with pulp writer Jack Williamson) and Frank Robbins (artist/writer of **JOHNNY HAZARD**). At the time, neither realized he was being inspired by Sickles instead of Caniff.

Sickles left the comic field for a career in illustrating but not before a host of cartoonists repeated his innovations: Alfred Andriola (one-time Caniff assistant) in **CHARLIE CHAN** and **KERRY DRAKE**, Mel Graff in **SECRET AGENT X-9**, Paul Norris in **VIC JORDAN**, Ray Bailey in **BRUCE GENTRY** and Jack Sparling in **CLAIRE VOYANT**.

Caniff took Sickles' neo-realistic approach a step farther. He merged Crane's volatile line and narrow panels and his own natural talent for dramatics into a single monolithic statement. His talent as a writer was stunning. Caniff wove intricately patterned plots together with infinite skill. In depth characters acted out their roles with astonishing literacy. Caniff fused style and script with such a brilliance and determination that stories peaked to a new level of believability.

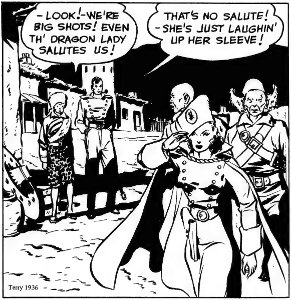
Things really began to happen in the early 40's. Terry Lee grew up to be a Flight Officer in the Air Force and, played against the background of a World War, took on considerable dimension. Now Caniff was really in his element. Terry was no longer a mere comic strip. It was a war novel!

Caniff became the Hemingway of comics, eliminating superfluous detail while producing an outstanding statement of contemporary life. His dialogue, resplendent with lyrical imagery, tough-guy slang and earthy humor, could have made any Hollywood screenwriter envious.

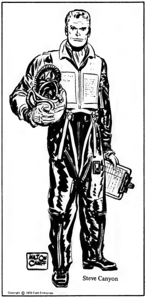
Caniff's simplicity of illustrative style and violent use of black and white contrast enabled him to increase the depth of field of his panels far beyond that of the more complex illustrators of the day.

He evolved a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort. Men and machines moved through various levels within a single panel. The easygoing, hard-fighting, rough, wrinkled leather look of Caniff's characters were in as stormy a state of contrast as his blacks were with his whites. This striking chiaroscuro thrust Caniff into the position of the world's most influential cartoonist.

Caniff synthesized the building blocks of motion pictures into the

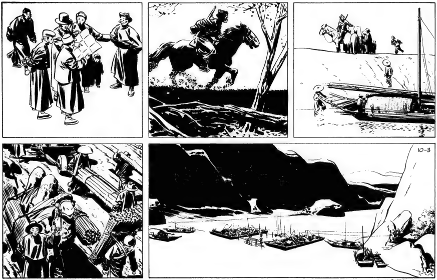

- LOOK!-WE'RE BIG SHOTS! EVEN TH' DRAGON LADY SALUTES US!
THAT'S NO SALUTE! -SHE'S JUST LAUGHIN' UP HER SLEEVE!

Terry 1936


MILTON CANIFF

Steve Canyon

Copyright © 1970 Field Enterprises



Copyright © 1970 Chicago Tribune Syndicate

graphic tools of his trade. Each panel was a movie shot frozen at the precise moment that would best convey the action within the frame. And that frame remained generally consistent in size so that the relationship between shots was more readily apparent. Caniff could easily have edited films on the side.

Low angles, high angles, long shots, close-ups, medium shots, truck-ins and establishing shots that served to introduce characters as well as locations, formed the vocabulary of the language his panels spoke. He often eliminated captions to speed the flow of visuals. His continuities were superb.

Caniff comments on his own work: *“As a comic-strip artist I have a greater responsibility than an actor or, for that matter, an entertainer of almost any kind. I create and control my own characters and stories, and through them I enter American homes seven days a week. If I want to keep my audience, the quality of my work must remain high, and I can allow no ambiguity or bad taste.*

“On the other hand, my rewards are great. How many artists or entertainers play to 45,000,000 people every day? How many stars remain popular for more than a few years? How many people in any line of work have the satisfaction of creating a world full of personalities which the public will accept as real, on a sustaining day-to-day basis?

“And that public is the final judge of our work. If funny business has become big business, it’s because a hundred million readers can’t be wrong.”

In 1935, Zane Grey’s intrepid KING OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED rode across the pages of the funnies and blazed a trail for other western heroes like Fred Harmon’s rugged RED RYDER (apparently based on the work of Will James) and Fran Striker’s LONE RANGER, drawn by Charles Flanders. They were preceeded by Bob Leffingwell’s LITTLE JOE and his ol’ time lawman pal Utah, and Garret Price’s WHITE BOY, a sensitive treatment about a pioneer boy and a pretty Indian girl.

Western action strips never found any lasting commercial success probably because films filled the public need. Then again the western genre is one of specialization, and there are really too few Fosters and Caniffs who could adequately produce the atmosphere of a genuinely exciting sagebrush saga.

On February 17, 1936 Lee Falk scored for King Features with comics first masked costume hero, THE PHANTOM. His origin was considerably more imaginative than most others that followed.

“Four centuries ago, the lone survivor of a pirate raid was washed ashore on a remote Bengali beach, where friendly natives found him. On the skull of his father’s murderer, this man made the Oath Of The Skull! He was the first Phantom!”

For the first time readers were present at the super hero swearing-in ceremony. *“I swear to devote my life to the destruction of piracy, cruelty and greed, and my sons will follow me!”* For four centuries the dynastic origins continued, each successive Phantom bearing a son who was taught the ways of tracking, hunting and fighting. When and if the Phantom died, the son stepped in to fill his father’s mask. The natives believed he was immortal and told tales about “The Ghost Who Walks” that can never die.

Ray Moore’s visualization of The Phantom portrayed him as a grim figure with the muscles of a Goliath, setting the style for generations of comic heroes yet to come. Garbed in purple from head to toe, the Phantom sported a pair of yellow candy-striped tights and a brace of pistols. His domino mask mysteriously revealed no pupils. As if all this wasn’t enough, he was aided by his faithful wolf Devil, a mighty stallion Hero and a skull ring that left an indelible impression on villains’ aching jawbones. Judging by the strip’s current popularity, The Phantom may indeed be immortal.

The comics had “borrowed” much from the movies and the movies from the comics. After all, isn’t a film simply a series of pictures placed side-by-side. Not only is the form similar but the content also. Charlie Chaplin appeared in the comic strips as early as 1916. Griffith’s innovations (like the close-up) in films such as *Birth Of A Nation* and *Way Down East* had their calculated effect on comic storytelling.

The funnies imitated Mack Sennett’s Keystone Cops comedies like *Tillie’s Punctured Romance, Love and Rubbish* and *Little Robinson Corkscrew.* Hal Roach’s Our Gang series came from Ed Carter’s Just Kids. Buck Rogers owes a debt to Fritz Lang for paving the way with *Frau Im Mond* and *Metropolis.* Von Sternberg’s *Underworld,* Raoul Walsh’s *Me, Gangster,* Mervyn Leroy’s *Little Caesar,* Wellman’s *Public Enemy* and Hawk’s *Scarface* all left their impressions on Dick Tracy.

Flash Gordon found his match in Korda’s *Shape Of Things To Come* and *Just Imagine,* as well as in Rex Ingram’s *Prisoner Of Zenda* and *Scaramouche.* John Ford’s *Lost Patrol* and Irving Pichel’s *Most Dangerous Game* were Jungle Jim’s predecessors. Terry and The Pirates took lessons from Von Sternberg’s *Morocco* and *The Scarlet Empress,* Hitchcock’s *East Of Shanghai* and Curtiz’ *Captain Blood.* The list is virtually endless.

But the films hadn’t ignored the comics anymore than the comics had ignored them. Windsor McCay’s *Gertie The Dinosaur* was the first animated cartoon series. The Gumps, Bringing Up Father, The Katzenjammer Kids, Krazy Kat, Little Orphan Annie, Skippy, Blondie, Gasoline Alley, Lil’ Abner and others all found their way to the silver screen over the years.

Now the motion picture teamed with the comics to unleash a torrent of sensational cliff-hanging serials that began with *The Adventures Of Tarzan* in 1928. In 1936, Universal Studios produced the most expensive serial ever made – *Flash Gordon,* starring Buster Crabbe who was born to play the part. He doubled for *Buck Rogers* in 1939 and for Thunda in *King Of The Congo. Ace Drummand, Red Ryder, Smilin’ Jack, Brick Bradford, Dick Tracy, Don Winslow, Jungle Jim, The Lone Ranger, Mandrake, The Phantom, Secret Agent X-9, Tailspin Tommy* and *Terry and The Pirates* thrilled audiences with their hair-raising exploits in the movies. There would be more later.

In 1936, Hal Foster announced his resignation on the Tarzan page, confident United Features Syndicate was going to have *“one hell of a time replacing me.”* That same day the syndicate called Burne Hogarth who was signed as Foster’s successor. At first an imitation of his predecessor’s version, Hogarth’s Tarzan rapidly developed into a grim, determined man-animal, inevitably gesturing with melodramatic poise reminiscent of silent films.

Hogarth, as his name might suggest, was concerned with the tradition of fine art as much as Foster. His virtuosity with composition was awesome. Hogarth considered his panel content separately and as a collective arrangement of compositions *“such as Michelangelo had achieved in the Sistine ceiling, divided into distinct panels but united in a single grandiose schema.”* His unabashed admiration for Michelangelo is evident in the attitude of his figures.

Hogarth applied the classic principles of compositions like those used by Rubens, Gericault and Caravaggio, to the comic page. Where Foster contrasted his animated panels with static scenes, Hogarth kept his at a sustained level of excitement. By the use of dynamic compositions of figures, directionals (such as trees and vines) and forceful silhouettes, he produced a work of oppressive intensity, a statement of moving power and energy.

Every panel revealed characters caught at the moment of crisis. Hogarth’s gallery of players were agonizing portraits of faces tormented with passion and envy, twisted with greed and hatred. Muscles tensed mechanically to reveal figures ever reacting in a state of mobilized conflict.

His backgrounds were extentions of his characters. Gnarled trees wound menacingly across panels like ancient fingers, fetid swamps teemed with unseen danger, dark and sinister landscapes brimmed with the lurking unknown. Where Foster’s jungle was an idyllic paradise, Hogarth’s was an ominous terrain. Tarzan became all the more masterful a figure since he lorded over a perilous purgatory rather than a peaceful playground.

The strip became a series of anatomical figure studies stretching, leaping, swimming and fighting for their lives. Hogarth visualized the King of the Jungle as a magnificent god, a pantheon being of perfection. His animals were masterpieces of expressive savagery

Burne Hogarth was born in Chicago on December 25, 1911 and grew up with a profound inclination toward art. He majored in art at Northwestern and Columbia Universities, studying the technical and historical aspects of his craft. Meanwhile he apprenticed with several minor strips including PIECES OF EIGHT, a tale of stolen treasure and piracy on the high seas. Then United Features called him to try the Tarzan strip. His two other strips (DRAGO, a kind of gaucho Scarlet Pimpernel and MIRACLE JONES, a sexy humor strip) seemed to resist his ultradramatic approach.

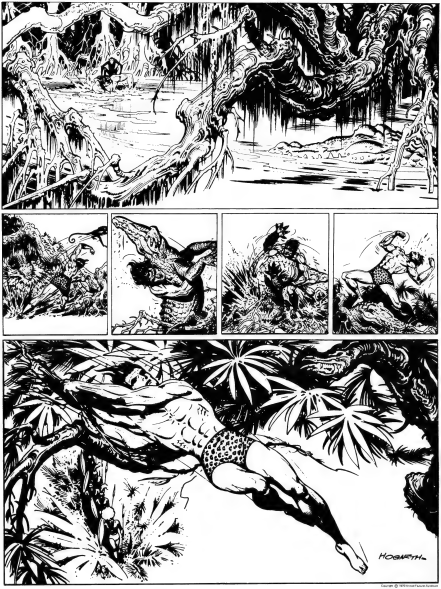
In 1947 Hogarth founded the New York Cartoonists and Illustrators School (renamed The School of Visual Arts) and began a new career as teacher and lecturer. His ten years of Tarzan, however, brought the world’s foremost mosquito opera to a new level of achievement. Though others have since directed the ape man’s saga, it is Hogarth’s nightmarish *mise en secne* that one remembers most vividly.

Foster’s resignation on Tarzan was probably a matter of aesthetics more than anything else. Of course a strip of his own would undoubtedly bring greater financial reward but the simple truth was that Foster’s ability had outgrown the subject matter. He needed a theme, a thesis to match the magnitude of his talent and technique. In short, he needed an epic...and found it in PRINCE VALIANT.

With Valiant, Foster scaled the lofty peaks of his artistic capacity. Voyages to new worlds, encounters with dragons and demons, the clash of mounted men of iron, the caresses of a fair maiden and the exalted chivalry of gleaming knights on muscled steeds proceeded across Foster’s pages in a cavalcade of pomp and pageantry. With infinite care, he created another era drawn with such an abundance of detail that it transcended the realm of the comic strip and entered that of the historical novel.

Foster is a perfect example of an artist, his technique and his subject matter in complete harmony. He is one of a gifted few who understand the mechanics of endowing a strip with a genuine epic quality. His panoramic long shots of medieval tournament throngs, of sweeping landscapes and approaching armies, of seacoasts lined with battle-ready fleets are equally matched by his careful attention to authentic detail.

Foster admits he has taken poetic license by condensing two or three hundred years of history into Val’s



Copyright © 1970 United Features Syndicate

lifetime which began on February 13, 1937. Val, as a six year old child, was immediately thrust into battle as his family fled their kingdom to escape a traitorous usurper. They found refuge in Britain where Val grew into a handsome warrior Prince, knighted by King Arthur on the field of battle. Between savage encounters with Saxons, Picts, Huns and Vikings, Val met and married Aleta, Queen of the Misty Isles and raised four children of his own.

Foster averages about 50 hours a week on each Sunday page. Small wonder considering the wealth of accurate detail with which he fills the strip. Foster has never taken a shortcut or an easy way out in his visualization of Val's adventures. His fine illustrator's line and intellectual approach has been remarkably consistent for more than three decades.

Val's booty includes a host of awards including the National Cartoonists' Society's *Rueben* and the Banshees' *Silver Lady*. He has been elected into membership of Great Britain's distinguished Royal Society of Arts. The Duke of Windsor even gave his sanction by stating that Prince Valiant is *"the greatest contribution to English literature in the past hundred years."*

It seems only fitting that the man who created the first great hero strip should also create the last. Hail Foster!

These men, Outcault, Opper, McManus, Goldberg, McCay, Herriman, Segar, Young, Grey, Gould, Disney, Calkins, Raymond, Capp, Sickles, Caniff, Hogarth, Foster and dozens of others like them created the architecture with which the comic empire was built. All of them would, sooner or later, be published in comic book form.

Officially, the first comic book was printed in 1911. In an attempt to boost their newspaper circulation, the *Chicago American* issued a collection of MUTT AND JEFF strips in an 18" wide x 6" high format. The book was available for 6 coupons clipped from the newspaper plus postage. They sold 45,000 copies.

Though the general response to this off-size comic book was remarkable, newspaper and magazine publishers paid little attention. If they realized the market for such a product existed, they didn't know what to do about it. At least not until 1929 when an ambitious young man named George Delacorte published an experimental comic called *The Funnies.* As the circulation director for a pulp magazine publisher, the New Fiction Company, he theorized that a book of comics distributed on the newstands without newspaper affiliation might be successful.

He commissioned all new stories to be written and drawn for the book which was printed in tabloid size in full color by the Eastern Color Printing Co.

Though *The Funnies* published all original material, it still looked like a newspaper comic section. It folded unceremoniously after 13 issues.

A more successful approach was taken by the Whitman Publishing Company who reprinted the most popular strips in their Big Little Books. These were stiff cover books 3" square and 2" deep, that alternated wordless one-to-a-page panels with a page of type. The Big Little Books had substance and class but lacked the primitive appeal of full color comics, that of adjacent panels with balloons filled with hand-lettered dialogue.

The next stage of evolution came in 1933. Harry Wildenberg of the Eastern Color Printing Co. again considered the use of comic books for give-away premiums to promote other products, much like the Mutt and Jeff book. It was only natural he think in terms of the huge four color rotary newspaper presses at Eastern Color. His idea was simply this: to adapt the maximum image area that could be printed and the size of the paper used on the presses to produce a comic book.

The overall paper size was 36" x 23" which folded in half to make a newspaper page. That folded again to 18" x 11½" or tabloid size. Wildenberg reasoned that the sheet could be folded once more and the edges trimmed to form an 8¾" x 11¼" book. One sheet folded into 16 pages, 4 sheets of newspaper made a total of 64 pages. A full Sunday page reduced to half its size would fit perfectly and was still easily readable. Wildenberg had just given birth to the modern comic book.

Max Charles Gaines had joined up with Eastern Color as a salesman for the new comics. He convinced firms like Proctor & Gamble, Wheatena and Canada Dry to use the books for premiums. *Famous Funnies, Century of Comics, Funnies on Parade* and others using reprint material rolled off the presses in print runs of 100,000 to 250,000 each. Then Gaines tried an experiment of his own.

Positive that the public would accept the current format, he persuaded several newstand dealers near the office to display a few dozen issues of *Famous Funnies* onto which he had affixed labels marked "10¢". It was Friday. By Monday morning every book had sold out.

Eastern Color was now firmly convinced that comics had a future but was uncertain about how to market them. Recalling Delacorte's interest, they approached him with their new books. Reluctantly he ordered 35,000 and placed them in book stores instead of newsstands. American News, who controlled newsstand distribution, had refused to handle the books.

Then the *New York Daily News* ran a full page ad favorably assessing the drawing power of the comics. Suddenly everybody reappraised the situation. If it was good enough for the *News*, it was good enough for them. American News reconsidered and contracted for 250,000 comics. Delacorte had dropped his option which was picked up by Harold Moore. Moore and Eastern Color produced a special newsstand version of *Famous Funnies* (No. 1) which reprinted a dozen strips. The first five books lost money. The sixth broke even. The seventh showed a profit!

Others took notice. Gaines, now on his own, supplied the big push and published *SKIPPY Comics* as a give-away with Phillips' Dental Magnesia. He then started *Popular Comics* for Delacorte, which reprinted Tribune News strips like DICK TRACY and MOON MULLINS. United Features introduced *Tip Top Comics* in 1936 with THE CAPTAIN AND THE KIDS and LIL' ABNER. The McCay Company came out with *King Comics* featuring BLONDIE and POPEYE. Walt Disney published *MICKEY MOUSE Comics.*

Feature Book and *Single Series* spotlighted a single strip, often adventure-oriented, within its large four-color covers and black and white interiors. The book was printed on heavy paper that seemed to have gotten too much starch at the cleaners. Sixty-four pages for a dime.

Now about a dozen comics (in one form or another) were on the stands. Most were reprints of old material done for newspapers. Still, the form created by assembling strips into a single book was revolutionary and exciting, even habit forming. Reprint rights for all the popular strips had been put under contract. Independent publishers had to take anemic leftovers or were forced to create their own material.

One such publisher, ex-army officer, Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson did just that and produced *New Fun Comics* in February 1935. Unable to secure any big name strips, he filled the book with original material that consisted of historical adventure and humor strips. He published 6 issues that year. Wheeler-Nicholson was a pulp novelist of some reputation who specialized in historical adventure fiction. He wrote and drew number of the early strips in his books like The Blood Pearls, Captain Quick, She, The Vikings and Allan DeBeaufort. Additional features were Maginnis of the Mounties, The Golden Dragon, Castaway Island, Federal Men, Dr. Occult, Don Coyote, Daredevil Dunk and Sir Loin of Beef among others.

The book seemed to be holding its own, so Wheeler-Nicholson decided to put out a companion comic in December 1935. It was called *New Comics* and featured the same kind of humor/adventure material. *New Fun* became *More Fun Comics* with issue 7 and *New Comics* became *New Adventure,* then *Adventure Comics.* A third publication, *The New Book of Comics,* was issued in 1936.

They were all published on more or less monthly schedules, and printed by Harry Donenfeld who produced a number of men's pulp magazines for his own operation. The Major's comics were selling well but not well enough.

Donenfeld entered into a financial agreement with Wheeler-Nicholson and put up advances to keep the things going. But the depression panic was in full force, and even the pulps were doing badly. Only the best remained on the market. As a last resort, Donenfeld decided to try comics himself and bought out the interests of Major Wheeler-Nicholson who was at the point of bankruptcy. The Major returned to writing for a living.

Just as the early motion pictures discarded the binding traditions of the stage, the comic book would gradually eliminate the restrictive earmarks of the newspaper strips. The repetition of the title at the top of every page faded into clean, uncluttered borders. Panels became larger and varied in size. Stories and art were original and complete in a single issue. Adventure dominated. Heroes were tough cops and private dicks, counterfeited from the "black" detective pulps of the day, whose idea of a good time was shooting it out with a gang of pug-ugly crooks. In that image, Donenfeld created *Detective Comics* (March 1937).

Comics, which had by now standardized their size to 7¼" x 10¼", were all without a unifying concept, a consistent theme. *Detective* changed all that by becoming a crime pulp with pictures; a comic concerned with the universal conflict between law and order, between good and evil.

In it, SLAM BRADLEY biffed his way across languidly colored pages shared with BUCK MARSHALL, BRUCE NELSON, STEVE MALONE, LARRY STEELE, SPEED SAUNDERS and, with slightly less conceptual anemia COSMO, Phantom of Disguise, SPY, and DR. FU MANCHU. Being barely larger than life, the heroes of *Detective Comics* had a tough enough time overcoming their better equipped adversaries (usually fiendish orientals) let alone the titans of the newspaper syndicates. Everyone knew Flash Gordon could knock the hell out of Slam Bradley.

Comic heroes were outweighed, outnumbered and outclassed by the newspaper characters that spawned them. The papers had humor strips by the hundreds. Perhaps adventure stories were better suited to the comics. But even newspaper heroes were variations of another form. Didn't Tarzan begin as a novel? And Buck Rogers? And wasn't Tracy inspired by the fictional detectives? It would be foolish to imitate an imitation. Why not go back to the source?

What comics needed was a startling new approach, a bold and sensational direction to thrust them into the realm of popular success. Why not go back to the source? Perhaps the answer could be found there.

That source was the pulps! ■

The nation was in the mood for swift justice!

It was an era of crime, of Dillinger, Machine Gun Kelly, Alvin Karpis, Ma Barker, Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd. Crime was front page news. There were crimes of passion, crimes of revenge, crimes for gain, crimes for kicks.

The movies countered with their own brand of violence, with Bogart, Garfield, Lorre, Greenstreet, Cagney and Edward G. Robinson who as Little Caesar gasped his dying words, *"Mother of God is this the end of Rico!"*

And bullet for bullet, the pulps matched them all.

Pulps were untrimmed magazines named for the soft paper flecked with shreds of wood fibre on which they were printed. Publishers used pulp paper because there was nothing cheaper available. Pulps had little to do with quality. The key word was quantity! Publishers became successful by relentlessly asking themselves this question: How can I print more books, more often, more cheaply?

Those who most frequently answered that enigma made fortunes. Sometimes made fortunes then lost them. Profit margins were often as small as several hundred dollars per issue after everyone was paid. If everyone was paid! The idea was to have as many copies of as many books on the newsstands as possible.

Many titles were started only to be dropped after a few issues. Some bombed with a single issue. Others scored and lasted for decades. A few were so successful that publishing empires were built around them.

Pulps measured 9½" x 7½" and had 114 to 162 pages between full color enamel stock covers. Most had 128 pages which usually featured a lead novel of some 50,000 to 60,000 words and a half dozen short stories totaling an additional 20,000 words. Some books featured more stories of shorter length, again totaling about 80,000 words.

Some pulps were issued weekly, some monthly, others bi-monthly or quarterly, but at most times 250 titles were on newsstand display. Every month chalked up a staggering total of twenty million words!

Those words told every kind of story imaginable, no plot was too remote, no idea too fantastic. A partial list of the Hersey Publications indicate how well every subject was covered. There was *Flying Aces, Fire Fighters, Sky Birds, Loving Hearts, Underworld, Spy Stories, Mobs, Prison Stories, Quick-Trigger Western, Thrills Of The Jungle, Miracle Science and Fantasy Stories, South Sea Stories, Front Page Stories, Speakeasy Stories, Ghost Stories, Twice-A-Month Love Book, Strange Suicides, Speed Stories, Danger Trail, Dragnet* and a score of others. Newsstand browsing in those days became an adventure.

The pulps were cheaply printed, luridly illustrated, sensationally written and cost a thin dime. They were aimed at the masses, the vast lower and middle classes who needed an inexpensive medium of entertainment. But pulps did more than simply entertain, they thrilled, startled, fascinated, horrified, shocked and astonished. And one thing more, they sold!

A fraternity of dime novelists created hundreds of characters amid thousands of stories to satiate the public's omnivorous appetite for pulp fiction. Long before the comics, the pulps boasted dozens of super heroes. Not super in the sense of X-ray vision or the ability to fly, pulp heroes were somewhat more realistic. They were usually men whose senses were modified. Somehow, it all seemed to be within the realm of believability.

There was one in particular who captured the fancy of the public more than any other. One who was more original, more imaginative, more thrilling than the rest. He initiated the war of the pulp heroes, sold more books and lasted twice as long as most others. When he announced his presence it was always in style.

"Then, out of a blur, Janet saw an amazing scene that she was to understand later. On the floor just beyond the door lay the limp figure of a man, who had either been choked or slugged by an efficient foeman.

"That man was the guard who had been outside the door. It was his conqueror who had received Janet when the others thrust her through the doorway. He was still in sight, that person who had so promptly rolled the bound girl from harm's way, but he would not have been visible, except for the light that issued from the apartment.

THE BLOODY PULPS

"He was cloaked entirely in black, that being, except for his head, on which was a dark slouch hat. The headpiece was quite effective as the cloak, for both hid his face, but neither concealed his hands.

"Incased in thin black gloves, those fists were thrusting toward the open doorway and from each projected a huge automatic, guns that the strange invader had whipped suddenly from hidden holsters.

"Unseen lips produced a peal of sudden mirth–a strange, shuddering mockery, like a whisper that had come to life. The tone, sinister in its threat, was a challenge to foemen who had been driven off to cover by this same fighter upon this very evening.

"Veneered crooks were startled as they recognized their adversary; but to both Janet Barden and Gwendolyn Marcy, sight of this materialized battler was something that brought total amazement.

"The rival blondes were gaining their first impression on the formidable warrior who was known as THE SHADOW!"

Some of his entrances were even more startling:

"By the glow of automobile headlights beyond the veranda, The Shadow saw figures piling for the open door. They were enemies who would strike the instant that they entered, out of a darkness that some had already reached.

"Vaulting the balcony rail, The Shadow seemed to poise himself in mid-air as he straightened downward in the darkness. Arms spread, with the cloak sleeves wide, he landed squarely upon a table surrounded by four diners.

"Women shrieked as the black mass spread upon the table, obscuring the glasses and chinaware that crackled beneath the Shadow's crash. The Shadow had doubled to take the force of the drop.

"Before the diners realized that a human being had landed amidst them, he was launching for the center of the dance floor.

"One of the men who formed an adagio trio was sending the girl member of the troupe in a long spin through the air. As the girl arched into the high pirouette, The Shadow came sweeping into the spotlight, directly beneath the whirling form.

"Big guns were in The Shadow's fists. As he halted, he aimed toward the darkness of the veranda door. A half-second later–at the instant when the girl dancer landed safely in the arms that awaited her–The Shadow's fierce laugh burst high above the music of the orchestra.

"Music ended with The Shadow's taunt. He provided his own accompaniment for the aria that he uttered. It came from the automatics that he wielded. Gloved fingers pressed their triggers. Pumping muzzles tongued their deadly hail for the blackness toward the veranda floor.

"For the first time since crime had come to Parkland, crooks had arrived in massed formation. The Shadow was on hand to greet them."

Often The Shadow was more subtle. He'd gain entrance to a criminal mastermind's hideout through the use of a disguise. Such was the case in *The Fifth Napolean.*

"The Shadow obeyed. He stepped into a windowless chamber, vividly white under the glow of powerful electric lights. He stared at a tall figure that stood across the room glaring at him through slitted eyeholes.

"The figure was like a sheeted pillar of flame. It was covered from head to foot in a robe the color of freshly spilled blood. A scarlet mask hooded the head. Scarlet gloves concealed the hands and wrists. Pointed red slippers peeped from beneath the hem of the robe.

"'We welcome you to our little headquarters, Mr. Lifer Stone,' the masked figure purred. 'We've been waiting to meet you for a long time!'

"His voice was like the quavering whisper of a very old man. But again The Shadow's brain discounted the evidence of his senses. He was aware of power, strength, vitality. He knew he was facing a criminal genius of the underworld.

"The Fifth Napoleon!

"The Shadow's bluff as Lifer Stone had saved him from the smashing impact of mobster bullets. Now he faced death in a slower and more horrible form. His wrists were bound tightly to the arms of a chair.

"Behind him stood Mike Hammer, with the muzzle of a pistol jammed against the back of The Shadow's skull. Andy Martin and Con Platt were armed and watchful.

"On the desk of the Fifth Napoleon was a queer blue-glazed bottle. It looked as if it were made of stone. The Shadow divined that it contained corrosive acid.

"The laughter of the Fifth Napoleon was pitiless as he glared at the supposed convict. His blood-red hand picked up a long metal rod. The acid-dipped rod would burn out Lifer Stone's eyes. The red torturer lifted the stopper carefully from the bottle. A haze of spuming vapor eddied upward like steam.

"Over The Shadow's head sounded the rumbling roar of a subway train. A moment of silence, then a train roared past in the opposite direction.

"But The Shadow was not deceived. He knew the moment he heard that subway roar that he was not underground, but high in the air, in the tower of the Crown Building. The noise of the trains was perceptible only in his ears! Had they been real trains, the vibration of their passing would have made a jarring tingling through the soles of his feet.

"But there was no vibration whatever.

"The sound was therefore a purely mechanical one, reproduced on a phonograph record to deceive Lifer Stone and frighten him into talking.

"A second bit of observation confirmed The Shadow's certainty. Opposite the wall where the elevator was concealed was a tiny white knob on an otherwise smooth wall. The Shadow had noticed it out of the corner of his narrowed eyes. He suspected that behind it was a window overlooking the sunlit rooftops of Manhattan.

" 'Talk–or die, Lifer!' the hooded leader whispered.

" 'I dunno nuttin' about the D. A.,' The Shadow muttered out of the corner of his mouth. 'I never had nuttin' to do wit' Tiger Marsh's mob. I'm just a guy outa the Big House, tryin' to git along on me own, see?'

" 'Martin, unbind the prisoner's hands! Platt, bring the fingerprint apparatus and the records of Lifer Stone from the files! Hammer, keep your guns steady on the back of the prisoner's skull! If he moves, blow his brains out!'

"The Shadow's bonds were cut. Hammer's gun muzzle dug into the captive's skull, forcing him to remain motionless in the chair. Platt returned with an ink pad, sensitized paper, and a sheaf of records.

"The Shadow's fingers were smeared over the ink pad and pressed against the paper. The Fifth Napoleon snatched up the prints and compared them with the photographed record in his own hand. He laughed with shrill delight.

"'Proof positive! Gentlemen, we've got a more important guest than I dreamed of! This man is not Lifer Stone!'

"Gasps came from Martin and Platt. 'Who is he?'

"'The Shadow!'

"The Fifth Napoleon's whisper was like a breath of doom.

"'Dat's a lie!' The Shadow snarled, gruffly. 'I dunno watcha gabbin' about! Youse guys are nuts!'

"But he knew he had reached the end of his desperate convict bluff. His feet pressed tautly against the floor.

"'Tie up his hands!' the Fifth Napoleon cried.

"Platt and Martin leaned to obey. But the thrust of The Shadow's forward springing body sent them flying apart. Mike Hammer's gun roared harmlessly over his hunched shoulder. His hand closed tightly about the bluish acid container.

"He swung the bottle with a quick, spilling motion. The stuff sprayed like fuming, smoky rain. Drops spattered on the mask and robe of the Fifth Napoleon, sending him backward with a yell of agony. Platt threw an arm over his face and reeled dizzily. Andy Martin hurled himself to the floor, his burned hands writhing.

"The Shadow didn't wait to observe all this. His crouched body returned to his chair. Mike Hammer's finger was pressing his trigger when the chair went over backward under the thrust of The Shadow's feet. It struck Hammer off balance, upsetting him. He fell sprawling, and the gun bounced from his hand.

"Before he could slide forward and grab it, The Shadow had snatched up the gun.

"Flame from its jerking muzzle sent the dazed racketeers retreating through the gray haze of the spilled acid. The Shadow sprinted for the white knob in the bare wall opposite.

"A quick jerk and it turned. A panel slid back. Blinding sunlight spilled into the room. A window was disclosed, and beyond it the blue sky and the skyscrappers of Manhattan.

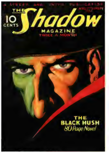
"The Shadow whirled and emptied his pistol at his foes. Slugs ripped back toward him. But The Shadow had dropped low as he fired. Except for a stinging pain along the flesh of his thigh, he was unhit.

"He smashed the window with a blow of his fist. Before the blood could gush from gashed knuckles, he was over the sill. He vanished out into the dizzy space hundreds of feet above the ground."

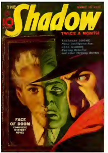
The Shadow epitomized the pulp heroes and the style of writing used to tell their exploits. Stories were all plot. Characterization was almost nonexistent. It would have slowed down the juggernaut velocity of the script. Chapters were epigrammatic and swiftly paced. Paragraphs were terse, never more then a few sentences. Sentences were clipped and concise. Dialogue was always to the point. Every single word kept the story moving. Authors composed laconic word pictures that read with furious speed.

"In a split second, she had leaped to the floor and was crouched there, a gun glittering in her hand.

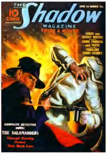
"The Shadow had withheld his fire for fear of hitting one of the victims behind the dancer. Both Roy and



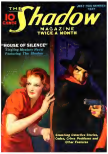
Copyright © 1933 Street & Smith Pub Inc



Copyright © 1938 Street & Smith Pub Inc



Copyright © 1936 Street & Smith Pub Inc


JULY 15th NUMBER 1937
THE
Shadow
10 CENTS
MAGAZINE
TWICE A MONTH
"HOUSE OF SILENCE"
Tingling Mystery Novel Featuring The Shadow
Smashing Detective Stories, Codes, Crime Problems and Other Features

Copyright © 1937 Street & Smith Pub Inc

Evelyn Standish were in the line of fire. But no such consideration stopped Clarita. Her pistol flamed at the cloaked figure of The Shadow.

"Only his own agility saved him. His knees dropped him into a vertical crouch below the rip of the bullet. With almost the same movement, he flung himself aside. Vic, forgotten for a precious instant, had a grim chance to go into action. His gun roared explosively.

"But, unnerved by the swiftness of events, Vic fired too fast and too high. He saw his wasted bullet flick plaster from the wall.

"Then, to his utter satisfaction, he realized that blood was oozing from a round hole in Clarita's forehead. Neither Vic nor The Shadow had fired that second shot. Its roar was covered by the echo of Vic's own gun. Someone at the doorway behind them had killed Clarita, by trying to kill The Shadow.

"The Shadow had already whirled. The intruder was revealed like a shape of ghastly horror in the living-room doorway. It was Number One! His mummy face gleamed yellow with hate above the starched ruff of his black satin Harlequin suit.

"The Shadow fired."

The identity of The Shadow and his modus operandi were occasionally explained on a token page near the tales' opening.

"Night–a windowless expanse of brick wall towering upward–archfiends of crookdom below–and flattened high on the wall a motionless batlike shadow. Slowly, the shadow begins slight movement, huge wings outspread in specter-like form–and with that slight motion, thundering blasts from below open a barrage against the black wraith.

"The Shadow is at bay!

"But high above the staccato cracking of mobster guns, out in the cool night air rings a peal of laughter. The triumph laugh of the Master of Darkness–The Shadow! Swiftly, the batlike shadow swoops into hurried movement–upward. Clinging closely to the wall, moving through a hot rain of leaden pellets smashing against the bricked background, The Shadow lifts himself. And with every movement comes a tiny squish–squish.

"The Shadow's suction cups! By this method he escapes from the trap set for him. As a fly crawls a wall, so does The Shadow with his suction cups–with a final laugh, to disappear over the top.

"Once again in his sanctum, earphones clamped to head, contact is made with agents: with Burbank, through whom go all the Master Fighter's orders; with Clyde Burke, reporter for the Classic; with Moe Shrevnitz, taxi driver-chauffeur for The Shadow; with Rutledge Mann, whose insurance business is at times but a screen for the Arch-foe of Crime's plans; with "Hawkeye" and Cliff Marsland, underworld characters whose knowledge of pending crime is most valuable; with Harry Vincent, who opens the way that The Shadow may not be thwarted in his scheming against mobland; with Jericho, giant African, whose enormous strength The Shadow has relied upon many times.

"Contacts made, earphones go back to their place on the wall. Then click, out goes the blue light, and from the darkness of the sanctum moves a blackness: The Shadow once more on the trail of pending crime.

"The Shadow himself is, in reality, Kent Allard, internationally famous aviator – but to few persons, if any, had this knowledge been given. For in his contacts with society, The Shadow takes on the guise of Lamont Cranston, big-game hunter and explorer. There is a real Lamont Cranston, but he spends most of his time in far-flung corners of the world; and it is with his permission that The Shadow adopts his identity.

"Thus does The Shadow go forth to battle crime – to vanquish his foes of the underworld and make justice triumph. Trailing his actions in his weird, chilling laugh – the signal for the law to attack; the omen that makes crooks cringe in fear.

"No matter what the crime, no matter how diabolical the plan, justice will triumph. Crime does not pay! The Shadow knows!"

Cranston was merely a disguise of The Shadow, in much the same way that Superman years later would play at being Clark Kent. Eventually even The Shadow's identity as Kent Allard would be in doubt.

Artists Graves Gladney and George Rozen painted Shadow covers with a kaleidoscope of color in the style popularized by James Montgomery Flagg: flat, poster-like tones with crisp, broad highlights. Interiors were often macabre masterpieces in black and white by Edd Cartier. Paul Orban and Earl Mayan also pitched in. Filler stories were illustrated by Creig Flessel among others.

Every issue a new super menace appeared to challenge The Shadow, each more imaginative than the last: *The Black Master, Green Eyes, Mox, Cyro, The Blue Sphinx, The Condor, Gray Fist, The Creeper, The Python, Voodoo Master, Quetzal, The Masked Headsman, The Crimson Phoenix, The Hand, Silver Skull, The Vindicator, Death's Harlequin, Q, The Wasp, The Green Terror, The Blur, Wizard of Crime, The Voice, Robot Master, The Mask, Macmordo* and countless others. Some came back more than once. Shiwan Khan returned four times.

The Shadow and his associate crime-busters alternately waged their battles between individual super-sinister villains and criminal organizations like *The Crime Cult, Six Men of Evil, The Silent Seven, Crime Clinic, The Salamanders, Intimidation Inc., Brothers of Doom, Green Hoods, League of Death* and *The Hydra.*

From the first tale, *The Living Shadow* (April 1931) to the last, *Whispering Eyes* (Summer 1949), The Shadow faced the most malevolent adversaries ever created in adventure fiction. Titles promised the ultimate in mystery. Each conflict was the Shadow's most dangerous case: *The Death Tower, The Shadow's Shadow, The Black Hush, Murder Marsh, The House That Vanished, City of Doom, Seven Drops of Blood, Vengeance Is Mine, Murder House, Death Turrets, Battle of Greed, The Crime Ray, The Devil's Paymaster, Freak Show Murders, The Stars Promise Death* and hundreds of others.

Though The Shadow was the pulp's primary character, little is known about his creator, even less about how he was created.

The Shadow saga began in the February 1929 issue of *Fame and Fortune*, a pulp which built its stories around high finance, big business and stock marketeers. Street & Smith, the leading pulp publishers of the day, had bought the magazine the previous year from its founder, Frank Tousey.

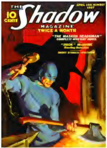
At the time, crime fiction was quite popular, so it was only natural the editors think along those lines when they attempted to boost circulation of their other books. They commissioned George C. Jenks to script a tale about a mysterious figure who protects honest investors against crooked financeers. Jenks, writing under the "house" name of Frank S. Lawton, produced *The Shadow of Wall Street.*

The cover visualized a hooded figure in green symbolically enveloping the New York Stock Exchange. The 35 page novelette revealed this Shadow as Compton Moore and was replete with suggestions about *"his awful, glittering eyes", "mocking laugh"* and frightening elusiveness. *"Then from behind the mask sounded a hollow laugh. The next moment The Shadow was gone!"*

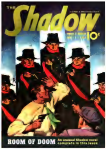
Readers clamored for more, only to be silenced when the stock market crash took its toll in money and lives. And along with it, The Shadow. *Fame and Fortune* was wiped out too.

Meanwhile, S & S's Thursday night radio mystery show was narrated by a haunting voice known only to listeners as The Shadow. The voice's mysterious and compelling laugh introduced the evening's crime drama and broadcast news about the forthcoming issue of *Detective Story Magazine.* The voice caught on, and Street & Smith decided to protect their property from being "borrowed" by copywriting the character in a magazine. That magazine would be called *The Shadow.*

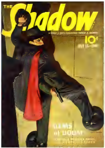
A contest was initiated and clues to



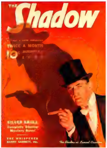
Copyright © 1937 Street & Smith Pub.Inc


THE
Shadow
10¢
ROOM OF DOOM
An unusual Shadow novel complete in this issue

Copyright © 1942 Street & Smith Pub.Inc



Copyright © 1940 Street & Smith Pub.Inc



Copyright © 1938 Street & Smith Pub.Inc

The Shadow's appearance were given over the air and in *Detective Story*. The first prize was $500, to be awarded the person whose deductions were the most accurate. Winners were announced in the July 25 issue of *Detective Story*. But, the first Shadow magazine had been out since March (dated April-June 1931), containing a 75,000 word novel entitled *The Living Shadow*. Loose ends were neatly tied up (or rather broadly implied) as The Shadow in the story became the same Shadow that broadcast the radio show!

The inside cover revealed an affidavit wherein The Shadow released *"the exclusive privilege"* of chronicling his exploits to Maxwell Grant. Like The Shadow, Grant also had another identity, that of Walter Brown Gibson. It is Gibson who was really The Shadow!

Gibson's life is almost as fascinating as those he created. Born in 1897, Gibson grew up in an era of spectacular theatrical performances like catching a cannonball, The Electric Girl and Human Fly routines. The Davenport Brothers, The Georgia Magnet and the Boston Spirit Medium, Margery, were confounding audiences in those days. His favorites, however, were the stage illusionists and the carny showmen, the sword swallowers, glass walkers and fire eaters. All left a deep and lasting impression on Gibson's young personality.

In his teens, he taught himself the ways of sleight-of-hand with the aid of Professor Hoffman's Modern Magic and Erdnase's Expert At The Card Table. But the necessity of regular meals got in the way and Gibson took a job in the early 1920's with the *Philadelphia Ledger*. As a reporter he learned the lore of words and how to tell a story briefly, interestingly and with punch. During this period Gibson began writing material for magazines which exploited the "True Crime" angle. His pulp career had been launched.

Simultaneously, he began to write about his favorite subject, magic. He wrote books for illusionist Howard Thurston, whom he assisted, and a number of volumes about Houdini, the world's greatest escape artist. Other books told the history of conjuring. Next, Gibson began writing about tricks he had invented or adapted. His wordage continued to add up steadily.

Now 33, Gibson (who had already done dozens of crime tales for Street & Smith) was offered the job of scripting the new Shadow series. He accepted and was commissioned to do four stories immediately. Gibson was already familiar with the radio Shadow, having first heard the voice's sibilant tones during a visit to Thurston's home.

It was decided *The Shadow Magazine* would be a quarterly. Gibson and the editors conferred on the book's details and those of the contest which was forthcoming. The rest was up to him.

Gibson began to work. He wove his knowledge of crime, his flair for dramatics and an ample helping of silent film serial technique together to produce a tapestry of crime in his premiere Shadow tale. Street & Smith had little hope for the new magazine and even rejected the idea of having an illustration done for the cover. Instead they searched through their old plates to find something that had an appropriate Shadow. The only one that came close pictured a Chinaman with his hands thrown up in fear.

Gibson submitted the manuscript and was told to write in an oriental character to fit the cover. He complied, handing in a total of 75,000 words for which he was paid $500. Then he completed several filler stories for the book (including one under his own name) and the issue went to press.

It hit the newstands like a bombshell and immediately sold out!

The second tale, *Eyes Of The Shadow*, had the same reaction. The Shadow became a monthly, printing 300,000 copies. Circulation continued to climb. Street & Smith asked Gibson to deliver two 60,000 word novels a month. Gibson mentally tallied the annual number of words, a staggering one million, four hundred forty thousand to be exact. He was stunned. The editor, taking Gibson's silence as a sign he was holding out for a better deal, quickly added, *"I'll have a few other stories for you to write to fill up any slack time you might have."*

That year he wrote 28, an incredible total of 1,680,000 words. Spare time??

The book's success was predicated upon the character of The Shadow. Of course, the public had experienced mystery men before.

The *paterfamilias* of the masked avenger cult began with the french movie serial FANTOMAS by Louis Feuillade in 1913. Based on a series of 32 novels (which first ran as newspaper installments) by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain, Fantomas was a super criminal garbed in a black hood, with a matching cloak and hat. His daughter was married to a reporter who worked closely with a Surete Inspector. The final installment revealed Fantomas and the Inspector as brothers. They battled to the very end as their ship sank in mid-ocean.

Souvestre and Allain had a unique method of creating their thrillers. Each would compose alternating chapters requiring the other writer to get Fantomas out of the dilemma which ended each episode. Allain wrote 10 additional books in about 1924 and a half dozen in 1945. An American version of the serial was made by Fox in 1920.

JIMMY DALE ALIAS THE GRAY SEAL was another masked hero of the early 1900's who sported an identifying ring, a dual identity and a girl friend named Margot. One could go back to the *Scarlet Pimpernel* and further if necessary.

There was The Clutching Hand in Pathe's 1916 *Exploits of Elaine*, The Black Mask in *The Man Who Disappeared*, The Laughing Mask in *The Iron Claw*. Other serials like *The Gray Ghost, Who Is Number One?, The Midnight Man, The Screaming Shadow, The Silent Avenger, The Scarlet Brand, Mark Of The Frog* and dozens of others all had either mysterious heroes or villains. Occasionally they had both.

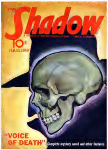
Gibson neatly incorporated the cliff hanger element into his Shadow stories. In fact, pulp titles were extentions of the names given chapters in serials. For that matter, The Shadow read like a serial script and was best digested in a single sitting. Later, two complete films and a serial would feature the character.

The early Shadow was a diamond in the rough that Gibson would polish to a high sparkle by 1933. The 1929 version was a paralytic pattern compared to the one to emerge with Gibson as scribe. Green hood, indeed! Gibson created the concealing slouch hat and black swirling cloak, the twin 45's, the ambiguous triple identity, the network of agents, the room with the blue light, the iridescent fire opal ring and an atmosphere overpowered by darkness and death.

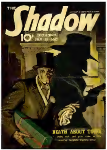
Story ideas sprang from news articles, famous crimes, historical events, scientific speculations, from anywhere and everywhere. Every novel had at least one or more inescapable traps and impossible escapes. Gibson's Houdini efforts paid off. He frequently adapted magic illusions and their underlying principles to his intricate plots. His rate was soon boosted to $750 a story. Gibson rented a triplex apartment near Central Park and took to living like a prince.

Gibson kept turning out The Shadow novels whenever and wherever he went. On trips, on vacations, he continued working. After awhile, he decided to try country life and moved to Maine. The cabin he was having built, however, was uncompleted. With a deadline pressing, he had little choice. Gibson ordered the carpenters to build a desk in the center of the cabin's foundation. He plunked his Remington down, pulled up a nail keg and began to type. By the time the builders had erected the structure, Gibson had written his next entire novel. He still has the desk.

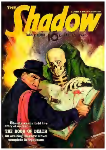
Ordinarily, Gibson worked on a battery of 3 typewriters. When one began to "get tired", he'd move to the second, then the third. He worked in a continuous flow, actually composing the tale on the typewriter. The hours he spent pounding the machines would swell his fingers, often bloody the tips. It was almost enough to ruin a good second deal, top change or Charlier pass.


THE Shadow
10¢
FEB.15.1940
"VOICE OF DEATH"
Complete mystery novel and other features

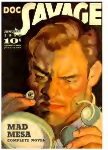
Copyright © 1939 Street & Smith Pub Inc



Copyright © 1942 Street & Smith Pub Inc


THE Shadow
TWICE A MONTH
10¢
Bloody words told the story of murder
THE BOOK OF DEATH
An exciting Shadow Novel complete in this issue

Copyright © 1941 Street & Smith Pub Inc



Copyright © 1938 Street & Smith Pub Inc

His output was prodigious. For more than 10 years, he wrote a complete 60,000 word novel every other week and for the next 4 years, one a month. His grand total of 282 novels would, in book form, fill 30 feet of shelves. Though the tales relied on a prescribed formula, each featured an imaginative villain, spectacular crimes, ingenious traps, interesting locations and unique approaches that enabled The Shadow to outlive all his rivals.

Gibson tells how he became the demon wordsmith of the pulps.

"I had gone on the theory that 2,000 to 3,000 words a day was a writer's proper stint, perhaps the maximum one is capable of, certainly a good day's work. But to meet The Shadow schedule I had to hit 5,000 words or more per day. I geared for that pace and found that instead of being worn out by 5,000 words I was just reaching my peak. I made 10,000 words my goal and found I could reach it. Some stories I wrote in 4 days each, starting early Monday morning finishing late Thursday night. On these occasions I averaged 15,000 words a day, or nearly 60 typewritten pages, a pace of 4 to 5 pages an hour for 12 to 15 hours.

"By living, thinking, even dreaming the story in one continued process, ideas came faster and faster. Sometimes the typewriter keys would fly so fast that I wondered if my fingers could keep up with them. And at the finish of the story I often had to take a few days off as my fingertips were too sore to begin work on the next book.

"So I wrote a few of the novels in 4 days, a few more in 5 days and more in 6 days (which I thought then was a more sensible pace). But 8 to 10 days per novel proved best, sometimes with a break of a half-day or a day between novels. In terms of pages I set 20 pages as a day's minimum, 30 pages as a good average, and 40 pages as something special."

Gibson was at his best when he described The Shadow in his element. One tale opened like this, *"Gloria Brent was looking at shadows.*

"Streaky things, they stretched themselves from basement doorways, from beneath overhanging balconies. They were cast even by projecting signs that wavered ever so slightly from the slow swirl of the fog.

"But there was nothing slow about the motion of the shadows themselves. Rather they seemed to swoop, to rise like living waifs of a distraught imagination, only to spread and evaporate into mere gray shadings as Gloria approached each looming umbra. It was the fog that distorted these Chinatown shadows.

"Gloria argued that point nicely with herself. Of course it was the fog. It must be the fog too, that gave Gloria such shivers. There was always a bite to a San Francisco fog.

"That was the whole answer.

"In watching the shadowy streaks that jolted queerly, and close by, Gloria was quite oblivious to the weave of more distant shapes. Almost a half-block behind, a gliding shadow was keeping constant pace as though it were Gloria's own. Singularly, it seemed to seek other shadows as though magnetized by them. Once blended with a blotch of darkness, it disappeared, but later it would unexpectedly emerge from the blackness in a most unlikely quarter.

"Only once did that shadowy trailer reveal itself as something possessing substance. That was when Gloria had turned a corner and could not have looked back to see the sudden change. Gathering itself like ink drawn by a blotter, that shape became a silhouetted figure that took a quick shortcut to the corner. Despite the clammy dampness of the fog, there was a slight sweep of a cloak that trailed from hidden shoulders: a momentary glint from keen, burning eyes beneath the obscuring brim of a black slouch hat.

"The Shadow, master stalker of the night, had for some reason known only to himself, picked up the trail of Gloria Brent, the girl who was seeking a mysterious Jade Dragon.

"Plucking an automatic from beneath his cloak, The Shadow swirled forward like a blackened portion of the fog itself, tracing a curved course into Hangman's Alley, where the very paving bore the greenish hue of death.

"But The Shadow's gaze was not upon those cobbles that so resembled skulls. His eyes were still fixed upward, looking for living heads along the cornices. Should a menace be due, it would strike from above.

"The Shadow knew."

The pulp's unprecedented success had brought about a change of format for the radio show. Blue Coal offered to produce the show which would feature The Shadow as the central character. But with a variation. The radio Shadow would have the ability *"to cloud men's minds so that they could not see him."*

The show's original writer, Harry Charlot, introduced Margo Lane, The Shadow's friend and companion. Other characters were culled from the books. Later writers included Max Erlich and Alfred Bester. Though they used his pulps as their source, Gibson had nothing to do with the radio series.

Over the haunting organ strains of Omphale's Spinning Wheel the voice said, *"The weed of crime bears bitter fruit! Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? THE SHADOW KNOWS!"* From 1937 to 1939, Orson Welles became The Shadow, projecting lines with a compelling and mesmeric timbre to his forceful Shakespearian delivery. He confirmed his reputation as radio's "man of mystery". On Halloween 1938, Welles' Mercury Theatre production scared the hell out of the nation with his *War Of The Worlds* broadcast.

It was unfortunate for anything that got between me and the radio when it was time for The Shadow, Sunday afternoon at 5 PM over WOR. Tales like *The Black Witch Of High Tower* and *Werewolf Of Hamilton Mansion* capped weekend vacations before school started again Monday. Whenever Cranston became The Shadow, his voice would go into a kind of echo chamber effect. The show lasted until 1954; TV had routed all the radio heroes. Regretfully, today's youth will grow up without hearing The Shadow's sibilant laugh, without the opportunity to let their imagination se the scene and play the action.

Gibson bowed out of The Shadow series in July 1946 to revive *Conjurer's Magazine* with Houdini's brother; produce and narrate *Strange,* a weekly network radio show about the supernatural; go on tour with Blackstone the magician; write a dozen more magic books and raise a family. He had married the lovely Litska Raymond, a lady magician from Pennsylvania.

Bruce Elliott replaced Gibson as The Shadow's raconteur.

Elliott and another young magician had spent countless afternoons in the 42nd Street Automat swiping coin and card tricks from each other. The other man was Orson Welles who later produced his own magical extravaganza on Broadway. Coincidentally, both men not only look alike but sound alike. And god only knows what else.

In 1942 Gibson and Elliott had teamed to produce a bi-monthly magic periodical called *The Phoenix.* Elliott was a natural to continue The Shadow saga when Gibson left. For the next two years, he wrote 15 tales of murder and mayhem like *Murder in White* and *Svengali Kill.* The Shadow charisma had worn thin. Consequently, Elliott's violent verbiage stressed Cranston as the detective, occasionally ignoring The Shadow guise completely.

At one point during that period a Street & Smith editor, John Nanovic, informed Elliott the manuscript was lost and that it was to be done over again. BY THE NEXT DAY! Instead of writing it over, Elliott changed the names of characters in two short crime stories he had written, typed an additional 15,000 words to blend the whole thing together, and submitted the package by the following morning. They never did find out how he managed it. Elliott told the editor in a satanic growl that a magician never reveals his secrets.

He ran the gamut of crime possibilities by producing variations of locked room mysteries and impossible murders. In 1948 Elliott became editor of *Dude* and *Gent* magazines, penned a half dozen magic books and authored the Flash Gordon TV series. Gibson returned to script the 5 final Shadow pulps.

It has been a personal pleasure to know both men over the years and swap card tricks with each. It would be difficult to find a more personable gentleman than Gibson. Still as energetic and imaginative as ever, he continues to author several books a year (about his favorite subject, of course!). Elliott is outrageously charming and sophisticated and looks more like a sorcerer than the devil himself. Besides being the helmsman for a block of magazines, he continues writing S-F and crime novels. I've lost count of the times he's gotten me out of a jam.

The Shadow was successful in every medium—radio, pulps, a few hardbound books, games, pen lites, stationery, Shadow masks, and outfits, Big Little Books, movies and even in comics and newspaper strips. Ted Tindsley contributed 27 Shadow stories and Lester Dent wrote one which was revised by Gibson. The total run: 325 complete novels of a continuing character. The record still stands today.

The Shadow, in his position as the consummate pulp hero, paved the way for others. The closest runner-up also came from Street & Smith. DOC SAVAGE was his name and justice was his game.

The opening tale, *The Man Of Bronze* (March 1933), described the protagonist as he sat in the 86th floor of his skyscraper headquarters. Savage seemed to have *"the head and shoulders of a man sculpted in hard bronze. The lines of the features, the unusually high forehead, the mobile and muscular, but not too full mouth, the lean cheeks, denoted a power of character seldom seen.*

"The bronze of the hair was a little darker than the bronze of the features. The hair was straight, and layed down tightly as a metal skullcap. Most marvelous of all were the eyes. They glittered like pools of flake gold; they seemed to exert a hypnotic influence, a quality that would cause the most rash individual to hesitate."

Doc was Clark Savage, Jr., whose father had just died under strange circumstances. Doc decided to carry on in the family tradition, to travel *"from one end of the world to the other, looking for excitement and adventure, striving to help those who needed it, punishing those who deserved it."*

Doc planned to enforce that credo with the aid of his associates. Unlike most other heroes, Doc believed in the strength of numbers. Five of the "greatest brains" rallied to his cause.

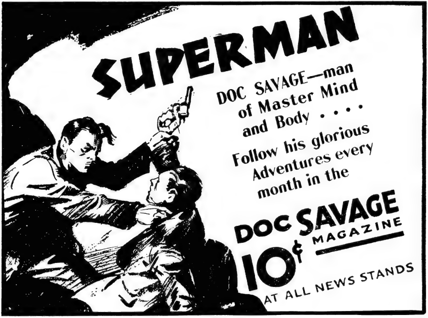
There was the dapper Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, "one of the wisest lawyers Harvard had ever matriculated." They called him "Ham" for short. Colonel John Renwick, "Renny," was the group's engineer and enjoyed smashing the panels from heavy doors with his fists. The bespectacled William Harper Littlejohn was the world's foremost authority on geology and archaeology. "Long Tom," Major Thomas J. Roberts, was the electrical expert. The group's fifth member was the most distinctive. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair was an ungainly ape of a man covered with reddish brown hair. Beneath his 5'2", 260 pound frame, "Monk" had the mind of a chemical genius.

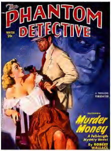
Doc could outdo them all. And more! He could speak any language, sidestep a bullet, follow a trail by his sense of smell, outrun a car, scale a sheer wall by gripping the tiniest cracks and a profusion of other mental and physical accomplishments. He was the ultimate jack-of-all trades, a consummate genius with the strength of Hercules. In other words, he was the Superman of the 30's.

While The Shadow confined most of his activities to New York (where Gibson lived much of the time), Doc Savage considered the world as a stage on which to play out the drama of good against evil. Though he starred in stories of violence, Doc was a clean living, clean thinking individual who never killed. The Shadow made up for it by cutting down a legion of super-thugs before the withering gunfire of his .45's. The Shadow was a secret figure of the night, but all the world knew Savage and his clan.

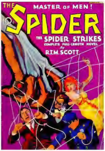
Crime and murder were the elements that engaged The Shadow's attention. Doc chose sides against madmen whose dream was universal domination. He collided with antagonists like *The Red Skull, The Czar Of Fear, The Thousand Headed Man, The Roar Devil, The Vanisher, Mad Eyes, The Living-Fire Menace, The Stone Man, The Black Black Witch, The Talking Devil, The Pharoah's Ghost, Satan Black, The Thing That Pursued, The Pure Evil* and scores of others. We knew Doc would be victorious in the end, but there were always some twenty-odd chapters of surprises that preceeded that predictible

1934 magazine ad for Doc Savage

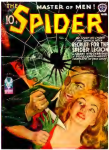

SUPERMAN
DOC SAVAGE—man of Master Mind and Body . . . .
Follow his glorious Adventures every month in the
DOC SAVAGE MAGAZINE
10¢
AT ALL NEWS STANDS



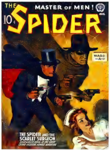
Copyright © 1950 Standard Magazines Inc



Copyright © 1933 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1943 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1941 Popular Pub Inc

outcome.

The Doc Savage series was written by Lester Dent under the name of "Kenneth Robeson". Dent was born in LaPlata, Missouri, a small rural community of 1,400 people. Dent, who would occasionally joke about not having worn shoes until he was 18, left his farm chores for a more promising life elsewhere.

After a period of travel and trial jobs, Dent settled down for 4 years as an Associated Press telegraph operator for the *Tulsa World-Tribune*. The torrent of words pouring across his desk everyday gave him the idea that perhaps he could be a writer. He was a voracious reader and had always exhibited a way with words. Like most authors, his early scripts were promptly returned with a printed rejection slip that said "No, try again."

Then, one of his stories was accepted. Others followed and were published in pulps like *War Aces* and *Western Trails*. Finally Street & Smith awarded him the contract for the Savage series. For the next 15 years, Dent wrote one 60,000 word Savage novel a month, at $750 each, several serials for *Argosy Magazine* and numerous other crime adventure tales, mostly under pseudonyms.

Though he moved back to LaPlata where he penned most of the Savage thrillers, Dent remained a rugged outdoorsman. He was a big redheaded man and towered over six feet, weighed about 250 pounds, wore a mustache and had an engaging sense of humor. Like Gibson, Dent dabbled with magic tricks. He was a member of The Explorer's Club, went deep sea diving and spent winters sailing his own yacht, "The Albatross," in the Caribbean. He died in 1959 while treasure hunting off the Florida coast. His biggest disappointment was the fact that he was never able to crash the "slick" magazines like the *Post* and *Colliers.*

Dent was the perfect pulp writer. His manipulation of words was occasionally outrageous, often quixotic, always colorful. He wrote impulsively, deliberately tongue-in-cheek in a style that could only be described as bravura frenzy:

"The machine gun snarled in their direction."

"Clouds scraped spongy gray flanks against the sharp tops of tall buildings."

"His four machine guns protruded tongues of red and tracers crawled around Doc's ship like cobwebs."

"The landing lights, tremendous flood lenses spraying incandescence that was almost hot daylight, had been switched on."

"The girl got behind the wheel, and the machine, tires spouting gravel, rocketed away..."

If Dent's way with words seemed pretentious, his approach completely lacked it. Framed over his typewriter was the formula (or Master Plot as he called it) that he used to write all his stories. *"No yarn of mine written to the formula has yet failed to sell,"* he revealed informally. *"It has worked on adventure, detective, western and air-war. It tells exactly where to put everything."*

His blueprint for successful stories required the outline be divided into 4 equal sections and this procedure be followed. FIRST PART: 1) Introduce the hero, swat him with a fistful of trouble, add menace or mystery - 2) Hero tries to solve mystery 3) Introduce ALL other characters into the action - 4) Near the end of the first quarter, physical conflict and surprise twist. Make it all happen logically. SECOND PART: 1) More grief for the hero - 2) Hero, being heroic, struggles - 3) Another physical conflict - 4) Surprise plot twist. Physical action should vary, fists one time, guns another. The idea is to avoid monotony. Does the hero find himself in a hell of a fix? THIRD PART: 1) More grief - 2) Hero corners villain in a struggle 3) physical conflict - 4) Surprising twist in which hero gets it in the neck bad. It helps to get in at least one minor surprise to a printed page. FOURTH PART: 1) Bury the hero in troubles - 2) Hero extricates himself using HIS OWN SKILL or brawn - 3) All mysteries cleared up except one - 4) Final twist, big climax, final mystery solved, unexpected twist ending - 5) The punch line to end it. The suspense must be logical and hold to the last line.

Dent composed every Doc Savage book with the same basic formula. Of the 181 published novels, he wrote 165. Norman A. Danberg (under the name Laurence Donovan), Alan Hathaway and William Bogart filled in the spaces.

Savage covers were quite different from the action approach taken by The Shadow. They were generally quite static, often employing an intellectual approach. Walter Baumhofer, Doc's first and foremost cover artist was requested to make the Man of Bronze resemble Clark Gable as much as possible. Baumhofer was followed by John Falter, Bob Harris and Modest Stein. Paul Orban did most of the black and white interior work.

When it came to gadgets and gimmicks Doc made James Bond and his crowd look like tinkerers. He always had just the right devices handy as in this sequence: *"From his finger tips, Doc stripped tiny bronze caps. These were thinble-like and so cleverly constructed that only the closest scrutiny would reveal their presence.*

"The thimbles held tiny hypodermic needles containing a drug which induced instant unconsciousness. These devices held the secret of Doc's magic touch.

"With his finger tips freed of the caps, Doc drew another of the pigeon eggs of metal. He wedged this in a cranny in the coarse timbers of the door, released the time-trigger, and leaped back, hands covering his ears.

"There was a flash, an ear-splitting roar! Parts of the ceiling came down. The door was turned into a cloud of flying beams and massive cedar planks.

"Doc waded through the subsiding storm of wreckage and glided down the black corridor beyond. Stairs led him downward. There was silence."

Comics and paperbacks put Doc Savage out of business in the summer of 1949, but in 1964 he came back by the same route. Bantam Paperbacks had decided to reissue the series. Nostalgic old timers and young, enthusiastic armchair adventurers rediscovered Doc and his gang and pushed sales figures solidly into the black just as his readers had done 30 years ago.

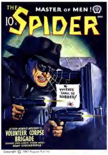
Bantam commissioned top notch illustrator James Bama to paint new covers for the series. Bama's covers are masterpieces of ultra-realism and have contributed more than a small measure of success to Savage's second time around. Bama says of his influences, *"When I was a kid, I saved the Flash Gordon Sunday strips for years, for early art instruction. Every week I'd copy Jungle Jim, Tarzan, Flash Gordon and Barney Baxter."* It seems as though the cycle has completed itself.

Far from being a Doc Savage but nonetheless being one of his rivals in the pulp game, was THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE. The Phantom, issued by Standard Publications, scored a total of 170 appearances, trailing Doc by a mere 11 issues.

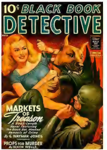
Covers usually witnessed the enactment of a crime or the result of the deed. Snarling hoods threatened sexy blondes with drawn .45's or sultry redheads frisked corpses as murderers poised unexpectedly behind them. And beyond each scene, the face of the Phantom loomed symbolically like a spectre. Artists included Will Gilbert, Emery Clarke and Rudolph Belarski who painted most of the covers. Interiors were done by Mel Graff and Paul Orban among others.

The Phantom was chronicled by G. Wayman Jones, who did 9 of the first 10 issues, and by Robert Wallace, who continued the run. In 1932 Jones had authored *Alias Mr. Death* and *The Phantom Stalks,* a pair of unrelated (except by subject matter) characters. Both were hardbound novels about vigilante justice and undoubtedly were the forerunners of the Phantom series which ran from February 1933 to the Summer of 1953 on a monthly, bi-monthly and quarterly basis for the span of 20 years.

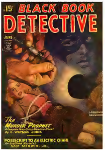
The Phantom lacked the pure sensationalism of The Shadow and the imaginative variety of Savage. The titles, however, still sounded the same: *Master Of The Damned, The Criminal Caesar,*



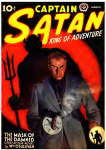
Copyright © 1941 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1943 Better Pub Inc



Copyright © 1947 Better Pub Inc



Copyright © 1938 Popular Pub Inc

Death Rides The Blizzard, Murder Makes A Movie, Mansions Of Despair, Odds On Death and others.

The Phantom was called into action by a red light signal from a towering skyscraper. The text in every issue usually explained his presence this way, *"Richard Curtis Van Loan, idler, playboy millionaire, wasn't exactly the carefree individual he pretended to be. For years now, he had lived a dual existence. As Van Loan he attended gay parties, escorted Muriel about town, rarely missed a first night performance and every headwaiter in town knew him well.*

"But as the Phantom Detective he lived an altogether different existence. As the Phantom he battled crime and criminals, exposed himself to dangers which sometimes mounted to a point where even he wondered if he would come out alive.

"Not that the crooks he fought had all the advantages. Van Loan had plenty of them himself, even if he had got into this undercover work by sheer accident. Frank Havens had been responsible for that when he had prevailed upon the restless and dissatisfied Van to investigate a case which had stumped the police—and he had solved it so expertly that he had discovered to his own amazement that he had a peculiar aptitude for this type of work.

"That was when the Phantom Detective had been born. And Van Loan had not gone into this dangerous game blindly. He had buckled down and studied criminology in all of its various phases and now possessed a complete library on the subject. He learned how to shoot fast and straight, to fight with any sort of weapon. He studied how to stalk his prey, gather evidence, then pounce.

"He created a secret crime laboratory which was equipped with every known device to help him round up killers and crooks. He became a master at the art of disguise, specializing in the uncanny skill which enables a man to be someone else without the use of more than a minimum of paints and no false whiskers. He could create a new face over his own if he wished—and he often did. But when he adopted a new identity, he lived it."

THE SPIDER was an ambitious amalgam of the preceeding three characters and another addition to the playboy-as-hero stable. Yet in certain ways he outdid them all. His idea of mercy was a bullet between the eyes instead of in the stomach. The thought of rehabilitation never entered his mind. Woe be to criminals who fell into the Spider's web. He'd often execute them before they had a chance to draw their guns. Once, when he needed a human head, he simply decapitated the first felon who crossed his path. He was the ultimate right-winger of the pulps.

The Spider's grim onslaught of crime's brotherhood began in the opening issue (October 1933) like this: *"In one more second Wentworth would undoubtedly have been dead, but an almost inaudible cough sounded from beneath his handkerchief. The black automatic clattered upon the table. A hole in Blunton's forehead two drops of blood emerged and struggled downward as far as an eyebrow before his heart ceased beating.*

"Then it was that Wentworth did a dangerous thing. From a cunning artifice, secretly contrived at the bottom of his cigarette lighter, he withdrew a tiny seal and pressed it upon the forehead of the dead man. There, close to the small hole, was clearly depicted, in rich vermilion, the tiny outline of an ugly spider—the mark of the mysterious killer who had shocked New York City at intervals throughout a number of years.

"The act seemed more than dangerous. It seemed utterly reckless. Only a man like Richard Wentworth, if there were such another man, would have incurred such a risk.

"In a few hours, perhaps in a few minutes, the ship would be agog with excitement. A murder had been committed, and the most baffling criminal of modern times would be known to be on the ship. The news would be flashed to shore and would be the sensation of the morning papers. "The Spider" was coming to New York! Hundreds of the best detectives would meet the boat, and the keenest minds of New York's great police force would study the lives and habits of every person who arrived on the boat."

He was as mysterious as The Shadow, yet the police and the underworld hated and tracked him simultaneously. In his own way, he was as dedicated and determined as Doc Savage, though his only assistant was the turbanned Hindu servant Ram Singh. Like the Phantom, he was a master of disguise and spent much of his time in make-up.

While The Shadow dealt out local justice and Doc Savage handled the world, The Spider generally busied himself snaring criminals who threatened with national crisis. Titles reflected the tone of the stories: *Builders Of The Dark Empire, Reign Of The Silver Terror, The Pain Emperor, Master Of The Death-Madness, Overlord Of The Damned, The Mayor Of Hell, Satan's Sightless Legions, The Devil's Death-Dwarfs, Slaves Of The Black Monarch, Rule Of The Monstermen, Revolt Of The Underworld* and a score of similar tales.

Reginald Thomas Maitland Scott scripted the first two Spider novels, patterning them after his 1927 hardbound book *Aurelius Smith, Detective.* Smith, his servant Langa Doonh and girl assistant Bernice Asterley are the models for Wentworth, Ram Singh and Nita Van Sloan. The remaining 116 issues were written by Norvell Page under the name "Grant Stockbridge". Page was an ex-newspaperman for the *New York World-Telegram* who found pulp fiction more lucrative than newsprint. He eventually got $700 per story.

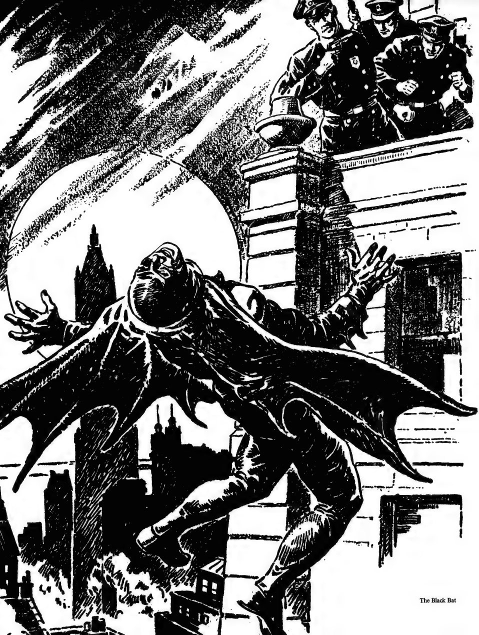
Spider covers equalled The Shadow's for excitement and skillful rendering. Among others, Walter Baumhofer handled the exteriors and J. Fleming Gould the interiors for the Popular Publications title. In 1938 Columbia produced *The Spider's Web,* a serial starring Wentworth and his alter ego. The Spider ceased spinning his web and his tales in December 1943.

OPERATOR No. 5 took the threat of national security one step further with a startling series of tales about the invasion of America. Jimmy Christopher was No. 5 who starred in 48 tales of anarchy and aggression by Frederick C. Davis using the *nom de plume* "Curtis Steele". Popular Publications recruited Jerome Rozen as cover illustrator and Rudolph Belarsky for the insides.

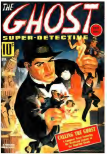
The opening narrative set the stage for the following encounters: *"Invisible, secret, deadly, the masked empire wielded its dread power of darkness throughout the nation. Havoc and ruin followed the terror torn thousands who fled the country to escape the Thirteenth Darkness. America, faced with certain disaster, placed her chance of survival in one man's capable hands—and prayed that the warrior gods might smile once more upon the miracle man of her Secret Service—Jimmy Christopher.*

America's undercover ace countered an endless confederation of chaos like *The Invasion Of The Crimson Death Cult, Blood Reign Of The Dictator, League Of War Monsters, Scourge Of The Invisible Death, Patriot's Death Battalion, Liberty's Suicide Legions, The Siege Of One Thousand Patriots, Army Without A Country, The Day Of The Damned, Corpse Cavalry Of The Yellow Vulture* and *The Dawn That Shook America.* He was the forerunner of the Bond, Flint, Solo cult of the 60's.

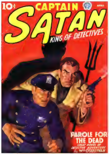
Operator No. 5's most prodigious victory was that over the Purple Invasion that began in June 1936 and continued for an epic run of 13 issues. The opening tale recounted the conquests of Emperor Maximilian I over Europe and Asia and his invasion of America. His savage army had already succeeded in taking the eastern coast and establishing their headquarters amid the ruins of New York City, with an executioner's block at Union Square. The President has taken lodging at a temporary White House in Jacksonville, Florida.



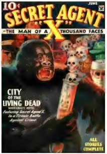
The Black Bat


THE GHOST
SUPER-DETECTIVE
10¢
CALLING THE GHOST
A Complete Novel Featuring the Mystifying Exploits of the Magician Sleuth

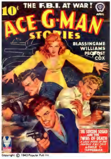
Copyright © 1939 Better Pub.Inc.



Copyright © 1938 Popular Pub Inc


10¢
JUNE
SECRET AGENT X
THE MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES
CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD
ALL STORIES COMPLETE

Copyright © 1934 Periodical Pub



Copyright © 1943 Popular Pub Inc

The supporting characters were introduced: No. 5's fiancee Diane Elliott (who had to be continually rescued), his sister Nan Christopher, his young aide Tim Donovan, his father John Christopher (code name Q-6) who dies of the Green Gas, Slips McGuire as an ex-con working for the cause, and Z-7 as the Chief of Intelligence.

All these and more weave their way through mobius plot lines that tell of Operator No. 5's betrayal by army officers, the President's suicide, Diane's rescue as she is about to be hung from the Liberty Bell on the fourth of July, a gold train attack, a fantastic naval battle, the destruction of the Panama Canal, American forces pushed beyond the Rocky Mountains, the use of plague bacteria on Salt Lake City, the purple fleet's onslaught of San Francisco, the purple army's march into Wyoming, the suicide charge of the Canadian Lancers, the destruction of Pittsburgh's steel mills, the Purple National Anthem, the American Revolutionary Army rallying in Death Valley, their push toward Los Angeles and destruction of the Purple Navy, the capture of the Purple Emperor and surrender of his legions, the Emperor's abduction by the Mongol hordes who ravage Chicago, New York attacked by the Goths, the Emperor's pact with the Yellow Warlord, the American encampment at Valley Forge, the final conflict in New York City, the fall of the Purple Empire and the rebuilding of America. It was the pulp version of *War and Peace,* a total of 780,000 words!

The July 1939 issue of *Black Book Detective* heralded another super sleuth into the pulp ranks. Shrouded in his grim guise, THE BLACK BAT, nocturnal nemesis of evil, took off into the crimeworld of fiction. Dime novel scribe G. Wayman Jones recorded a series of 62 sinister flights until the Winter of 1953. In 1934 Murray Leinster had scripted a short-run series about a mysterious detective called The Black Bat in *Black Bat Detective Mystery.* He was the literary ancestor of the 1939 version.

The Black Bat's origin was retold briefly in each tale. *"Tony Quinn's eyes, usually blank and staring, were alive and earnest now. Tony Quinn was not blind, although only three people knew that.*

"He had been blind. The accident that had blinded him horribly had occurred one day while Quinn was District Attorney. Crooks he had been prosecuting tried to destroy evidence by hurling corrosive acid upon it. Quinn had taken the acid squarely in the face. That was what had caused those ugly scars.

"He had gone blind instantly. Then had come weeks of hopelessness while he visited surgeon after surgeon, only to be told again and again that there was no chance of his regaining his sight.

"During the months of agony that had followed, Quinn had patiently tried to improve his other senses. He developed his hearing into something far more acute than a normal man's. His sense of touch became phenomenal. But he still despaired, for he was young and healthy, and nothing could take the place of sight.

"Quinn had been hopeless in his blindness until one night a girl had come to his home. Her name was Carol Baldwin, and she had a peculiar purpose in mind. Her father, a police officer dying of a bullet wound inflicted by crooks, had seen an opportunity to do good before he died. He had selected Tony Quinn to benefit by his offer because Quinn's fame as a prosecutor had gone far.

"So Tony Quinn secretly accompanied Carol Baldwin to a small town in the Mid-west. There, parts of her father's eyes had been grafted to the acid-scarred eyes of Tony Quinn. A modest country surgeon had done the job, completing it shortly before the death of Carol's father.

"Then had come more agonizing weeks until one night Quinn removed the bandages. He could see once more and, amazingly enough, nature seemed to have added a sort of bonus for his suffering. Quinn's eyes were abnormal. He could make them look as though they were quite blind and yet in the inkiest blackness he could see as well as in daylight. Faint colors were quite visible, and he could read fine print with light of any kind.

"Quinn then determined to keep the secret of his cure, carry on as a blind man and assume a new identity. For the sole purpose of fighting crime and criminals. He became, unknown to all but three persons, the Black Bat, a name he selected with some degree of irony over his former sightlessness. 'Blind as a bat,' he'd often called himself.

"Wearing jet black clothing, with a hood snugly fitted over his head to hide those telltale scars and his features, he became a voluntary investigator–and Nemesis–in crime cases which baffled the police. A cloak formed the rest of his regalia. It was a peculiar cloak for it was ribbed, like the wings of a bat and, when he extended his arms, he looked for all the world like one of those nocturnal mammals in full flight.

"In that guise, Quinn had become known and dreaded by the underworld. The police sought him also, in his Black Bat role, for he cared nothing for the red tape of the law. He shot when necessary, burglarized if by so doing he could outwit crooks. He battled them hard, and when it had to be, killers died at his hands."

Adventures featured titles like *Brand Of The Black Bat, The Faceless Satan, Without Blood They Die, The Murder Prophet, Eyes Of The Blind, Guardian In Black, Murder Among The Dying, With Malice Aforethought* and *The Murder Genius.*

Needless to say, the Black Bat had his comic book counterpart. How much he actually contributed to that character only Batman knows.

Street & Smith made another bid for dime novel readers in September 1936 with THE AVENGER. They exploited the "Kenneth Robeson" by-line on the covers in an effort to pick up Doc Savage fans. The actual writer was, in fact, Paul Ernst, a competent pulp noveleer of the day.

The Avenger was unquestionably one of the more unique characters to emerge from the pulp ranks. Each story described him again: *"Dick Benson was at the controls of the flying marvel now. Even seated, the man called The Avenger was an impressive figure. He had lost his beloved wife and small daughter in the callous machinations of a criminal ring–which loss had impelled him to dedicate his life and his great fortune to the fighting of the underworld.*

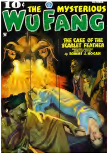
"The tragedy had turned his coal-black hair dead white. Also, the nerve shock had paralyzed his facial muscles in some curious way which made the dead flesh like wax; it could not move at the command of his nerves, but when his fingers moved it, it stayed in whatever place it was prodded. Thus he became a man of a thousand faces, for he could mold the obedient plastic of his countenance into the shape of the faces of others and pass as them.

"From the dead-white, immobile face under the snow-white hair, pale-gray eyes flamed forth. They were awe-inspiring, those pallid, deadly eyes. They were as cold as ice in a polar dawn and as menacing as the steel of dagger blades. They were the almost colorless orbs of an infallible marksman and of a person without pity for enemies.

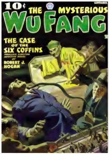
"They were, in a phrase, the eyes of a machine rather than a human being." He was the Plastic Man of the pulps.

The Avenger was aided by a [redacted] giant called Smitty and a sandy-haired Scotsman named Fergus MacMurdie. Petite Nellie Gray rounded out the trio. Posing as servants, Josh and Rosabel Newton, a Negro husband-wife team combined their talents whenever necessary to give the group additional power.

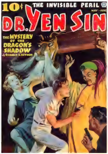
The Avenger was particularly notable for the number of traps he could get into within the space of a single story. The rule was: the more imaginative the trap, the more improbable the escape. Here's a perfect example: *"The man had started the cage downward before he had quite closed the ninth-floor doors, as most operators do. The doors were open six inches or so when the elevator gave that sickening lurch in its worn slides. Benson got his hands in that opening, with steely fingers clamping*



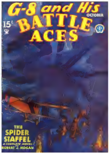
Copyright © 1935 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1935 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1936 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1934 Popular Pub Inc

down on the metal sill of the sliding doors.

"The cage fell eight inches, and stopped. It stopped because the top of it banged on Benson's head and shoulders, and those shoulders and head were held by Benson's vicelike grip on the ninth floor sill.

"The cable had parted above the cage. Only one thing kept it from falling ninety or a hundred feet to the bottom of the shaft. That one thing was Benson's tormented grasp. Benson hung by little more than his fingertips. The elevator, with two other men it it, hung on Benson.

"Smitty–' the white-haired man gasped, his paralyzed features remaining expressionless."

Justice Inc., The Devil's Horns, The Hate Master were all Avenger adventures, 24 of which appeared in his own book. Five additional tales by Emile Tepperman appeared in *Clues* but somehow in the changeover Benson became a normal man and lost much of his appeal.

From The Shadow to the Avenger, the pulp heroes maintained a vast secret society for sustaining law and order. They declared a personal war on their enemies and launched an irresistible crusade to crush the Napoleons of crime. Month after month, year upon year, armies of super-villains sprang up to plunder, intimidate and annihilate entire nations, and often, even the world if necessary.

A line-up full of other masked men masquerading as detectives materialized to clean up what the big leaguers had missed.

Cary Adair alias CAPTAIN SATAN began his 5 issue assault on evil in March 1938. William O'Sullivan scripted the playboy-turned-detective series for Popular Publications. An imitation of Doc Savage, CAPTAIN HAZZARD by Chester Hawks bowed for a single issue in May of the same year. JIM ANTHONY was another Savage mimic written by John Grange for *Super-Detective.* CAPTAIN ZERO at least stayed for 3 tales in November of 1949. He was Kirk Allyn, newsman, who had the power of invisibility between midnight and dawn. He could be seen as an empty outline during rainstorms.

THE ANGEL by Edward S. Ronns appeared for a single caper in *Angel Detective* July 1941. Stuart Towne's DON DIAVOLO, THE SCARLET WIZARD conjured up a 4 issue run in *Red Star Mystery* beginning June 1940. Three months previous, THE GREEN LAMA by Kendall Foster Crossen premiered in the pages of *Double Detective* for a series of 14 adventures before making his way into the comics. THE WIZARD by Phil Sheridan bowed in October of the same year to solve an even half dozen crimes. THE GHOST, another magician-detective, had made his debut that January. He was George Chance (really G. T. Fleming-Roberts) who narrated the tale in the first person tense. THE BLACK HOOD stalked the pages of *Hooded Detective* and *Black Hood Detective* in addition to his own radio show and comic book.

Murdoch, Kerrigan and Klaw, Emile Tepperman's SUICIDE SQUAD unleashed a blizzard of tommy gun slugs at their foemen in 1943's *Ace G-Man.* Robert J. Hogan's SECRET SIX took the same approach in a quartet of thrillers which commenced in October 1934. Ex-flying ace King commanded a coterie of undercover crime-busters which included The Key, Shakespeare, The Bishop, Luga and The Doctor. THE DOMINO LADY, clad seductively in a mask and gown of white, was the Blonde Phantom of *Mystery Adventure Magazine.*

Frederick C. Davis' MOON MAN series appeared in *Ten Detective Aces* sporadically between 1935 and 1936. Detective Sgt. Steve Thatcher donned the black robe and spherical helmet made of one-way glass which he could see out of, but prevented others from seeing into. He was kept company in the same book by THE COBRA who shot deadly venom-dipped darts from a cigarette holder. While crushing crime, he wore a frightening cobra headpiece.

THE WHISPERER by Cliff Goodrich was a particularly well written series that began as a filler in The Shadow magazine and was promoted to the lead feature in Crime Busters. The Whisperer was the guise of Police Commissioner "Wildcat" Gordon. *"The man inside drove with one hand. The other was busy. Slowly, an identity more feared by crooks than an entire squad of cops took form.*

"Whitish powder was rubbed into the bristly red hair of Wildcat. An odd pair of dental plates went into his mouth. The chin became oddly pointed. The man stopped the car, struggled into drab-gray clothing. A quaint, round-brimmed hat topped off the nondescript figure whose eyes seemed a colorless whitish blue.

"An eerie, whispering chuckle filled the coupe, drifted through the open window into the night. A furtive figure lurking on the sidewalk heard it. He gasped, slunk rapidly from sight in a nearby alley.

"The Whisperer, the little super-crook who preyed on crime, had taken up the trail."

Paul Chadwick's SECRET AGENT X was another "Mission Impossible" series about a nameless master spy. He often carried a small but effective gas gun and a continuous arsenal of imaginative gimmicks. To keep from leaving his fingerprints, he'd apply collodian to his fingertips. He was often called "The man of 1,000 faces" and used mouth and nostril plates to change his appearance, besides an unusual flesh colored plastic compound.

The English pulps had an equally colorful cast of crimebusters, one of the most interesting of which was Thurston Kyle THE NIGHT HAWK, written by John Brearly. He appeared in tales like *The Winged Avenger* as early as 1932. He was masked, in costume and flew with the aid of huge bird wings that were mechanically activated. Teaser copy heralded him as, *"silent as a phantom; swifter, more deadly than a swooping eagle, The Night Hawk streaks down from the skies, fearless and implacable - an enemy of crime."*

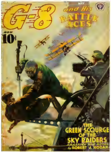
The crucible of crime spawned a half dozen criminal masterminds so evil they demanded series of their own. The most bizarre was DR. SATAN whose home was *Weird Tales.* Paul Ernst penned his 8 appearances which began in August 1935. Dr. Satan wielded the powers of black magic, cabalistic chants, magic formulas, ESP, hypnosis and plain old skullduggery. Good guy Ascott Keane opposed Satan's evil spells with the aid of white magic and occasionally a sound thrashing. It was the best of the villain series.

Dell's diabolic DR. DEATH did his demonic deeds in *All Detective Magazine* before he got his own 15 cent book in February 1935. Edward P. Norris using the name "Zorro" authored the tales and George Rozen, Rudolph Zirn and Frank Tinsley illustrated. DEATH was really occult scientist Rance Mandarin who is able to control the forces of the netherworld. His mission was to destroy all technical and scientific knowledge, returning mankind to the harmonious state The Creator intended.

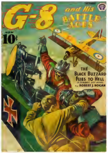
Norvell Page writing under the name "Randolph Craig" created the malevolent OCTOPUS in February of 1939. Page rewrote the second issue which appeared 2 months later, this time calling the villain THE SCORPION. They were both confounded by a mystery lawman called The Skull Killer. Both lasted a single issue. Maybe The Shadow was right about crime!

Flying saucerman Donald E. Keyhoe quilled DR. YEN-SIN in a trio of tales that started in May 1936. The oppressive oriental mimicked Fu-Manchu as did Robert J. Hogan's MYSTERIOUS WU-FANG in twice as many conflicts commencing in September of 1935. G-Man Val Kildare and his pal Jerry Hazard pitted their skills against the malevolent Mandarin. Yet it seemed that super villains just weren't bad enough or their prose not good enough to put them on the pulp best seller charts.

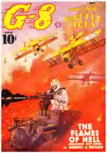
One of the most popular sellers, however, was the Air Hero, and in that genre G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES scored the most kills. Against a crimson WW1 sky filled with Bristols, Fokkers, Vickers, Hanriots, Nieuports, Pfalz', Albatros', Halberstadts and Spads, G-8


G-8 and His Battle Aces
NOW 10¢
THE GREEN SCOURGE OF THE SKY RAIDERS
SMASHING WAR NOVEL
by ROBERT J. HOGAN

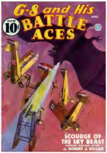
Copyright © 1940 Popular Pub Inc


OCTOBER
G-8 and His Battle Aces
NOW 10¢
THE BLACK BUZZARD FLIES TO HELL
by ROBERT J. HOGAN

Copyright © 1939 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1938 Popular Pub Inc


G-8 and His Battle Aces
NOW 10¢
APRIL
SCOURGE OF THE SKY BEAST
by ROBERT J. HOGAN

Copyright © 1936 Popular Pub Inc

flew a total of 110 missions. He was an airborne master spy who frequently appeared in disguise, a skill taught to him by his manservant Battle.

He was accompanied by ex-grid star Bull Martin and the diminuitive Nippy Weston in an assault against *The Vampire Staffel, The Hurricane Patrol, Wings Of The Juggernaut, Patrol Of The Dead, Wings of Satan, Curse Of The Sky Wolves, Death Rides The Ceiling, Flight From The Grave, Squadron Of The Damned, Black Aces Of Doom, Sky Coffins For Satan, Spider Staffel, Raiders Of The Death Patrol* and *Flying Coffins Of The Damned.* Covers were painted by Fred Blakeslee with interiors by John Fleming Gould.

When G-8 throttled his Spad off the runway, readers gripped their chairs preparing for not only a flight into enemy territory but an excursion into fantasy. Tales blended outrageous mixtures of science fiction, the supernatural and aircraft action into collision-course novels of unbridled imagination. *"Suddenly the whole thing in the air became lighted as though by day. The flash lasted only for a few seconds, then died away. But in that light, G-8 had seen his fears confirmed.*

"The Germans had certainly been ready to back up their threat. For there in the sky was spun a great web. A web that stretched as far above as the master spy could see and unending to the sides in either direction.

"The strands of that great mesh came together like any other spider's web. They were joined in the center, and it was near this center that the blazing objects were suspended.

"G-8 was close enough now to recognize the nature of those flaming torches which lighted the sky and the giant web about them. They were four of the bombers that had been ordered out by the master spy himself.

"He became conscious of a sickly feeling at the pit of his stomach. It didn't seem to matter that he had done his best to stop those ships and head them off. The fact remained that he had failed. Of course he had driven back the other bombers. But if he had started sooner, if the general had called him a few minutes earlier, all this disaster might have been avoided. Still, he knew that a man can only do so much.

"He wondered how Nippy and Bull were coming. Wondered where the spider that the message had mentioned might be—the giant tarantula. He tried to figure things out. But his mind was a jumble of thoughts, surmises and horrible sensations.

"Then suddenly he saw that spider."

Behind each bizarre threat lurked a mad German scientist, hoping his plot would be the one to end the Allied Resistance. It never did. Sooner or later each one would find himself in the crosshairs of G-8's thundering weapons. Pages roared with obligatory dogfight prose: *"Pressing his trigger button, he sent warming bursts from his chattering Vickers guns. He heard Nippy and Bull do the same as they stormed close beside him.*

"At that instant the Jerry flight broke up with startling abruptness. Three Fokkers, including that of the leader, zoomed sharply and screamed skyward. The other two continued to come on straight.

"Immediately, G-8 saw the trick. The three were to come in a split second after the fight started. It was a clever ruse to divert attention—to split up G-8's flight and cause him to hesitate for that vital second of time that would either spell defeat or victory.

"But as the Yanks raced in, they held their course for the two lower Fokkers. Suddenly, G-8's right arm went up into the air and across like a saber slash. Wam!

"Hissos groaned. Spads screamed as their wires knifed the air. The Spads plunged down.

"Tac-tac-tac! Vickers guns went mad in short bursts. White tracers fluffed out—into the two Fokkers, that returned the fire with their flaming Spandau guns.

"Then abruptly the noses of the three Spads shot into the air, straight for the three Jerry crates above, leaving one Fokker hurtling down in flames from the fire of G-8's guns and the other trying desperately to turn while there was time.

"Tac-tac-tac! Tac-tac-tac!

"Noses almost straight up into the blue, the Vickers guns of G-8 and his Battle Aces blasted again. The three Fokkers were already snarling down, yellow tracers slashing from the flame-tipped muzzles of their Spandaus."

The G-8 saga was the creation of ex-pilot Robert Jasper Hogan. Born in 1897, he was raised in Buskirk, New York under the stringent, inflexible eye of his minister father. A life in the service of the cloth held little appeal for Hogan whose athletic prowess exerted its influence early. After graduating from St. Lawrence University where he was an amateur boxer, Hogan went west for a term of bronc-bustin', brandin' an' brawlin'. WWI found him in the U. S. Aviation Service; flying had ultimately captured his fancy.

Hogan began to elaborate on his flying experiences and turned to the pulps for an outlet. His early air tales made him a natural for G-8 who found his wings in October 1933. Besides scripting a number of other dime novel heroes, Hogan occasionally wrote all the fillers in the G-8 book including the RED FALCON, SMOKE WADE and GREASEBALL JOE series. When G-8 was grounded in December 1942, Hogan authored a variety of fiction that included a number of hardbound western novels. He passed away in Miami, Florida in 1963. His obit credited him as being *"One of the nation's most prolific pulp writers."*

Three years after Hogan's death, G-8 appeared in a one-shot comic book entitled *G-8 And The Secret Weapon.* In 1968, Berkley-Medallion Paperbacks decided to reissue the G-8 series and commissioned award-winning illustrator Lou Feck to paint the covers. Feck rendered the first three which were engraved and printed, then rejected as unsuitable. The job was reassigned to Mort Kunstler who had painted several early covers for Bantam's Doc Savage reprints. Another rejection. The series was shelved.

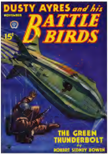
In 1969, I sold my first painting to Howard Winters at Lancer Books (which he used for *The Mighty Barbarians,* an anthology featuring another pulp character named Conan). Afterward, I took a few samples to art director Al Rudolph at Berkley-Medallion. During the interview, Tom Dardis the firm's vice president, was passing by and expressed an interest in one of my paintings and bought it on speculation (it was to be used a year later for the hard and soft-bound version of Sprague De-Camp's *Warlocks And Warriors*). A few weeks later they called to assign the G-8 covers to me on the strength of that single painting. I accepted with a great deal of pleasure and more than a little nostalgia.

Coincidentally, the first air-war magazine, *Air Stories,* had hit the stands the very day Lindbergh landed in Paris after the first transatlantic flight. It was followed by pulps like *Aces, Battle Birds, Daredevil Aces, The Long Eagle, Sky Fighters, War Birds* and *Wings.* Each was stuffed with romanticised tales of the 1914-1918 aerial conflict. Allied airmen were inevitably handsome and heroic; Germans were ruthless and cruel. Spads and Bristols were always hopelessly outnumbered by a threatening Jagstaffel that persistently dived out of the sun. The "Red Baron" was shot down in flames again and again by a score of British or French or American pilots. The pulps, it seems, invented the "chivalry" of WWI airborne warfare.

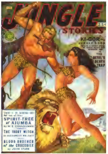
PHILIP STRANGE was one of the earliest of the flying heroes. Nicknamed the "Brain Devil" by the enemy, he was a show business mystic who had the power of hypnotism, precognition, ESP and, occasionally, mind-reading. He was also a skillful mimic and make-up artist, which allowed him passage through occupied territory with immunity.

Strange piloted his course through *Flying Aces* guided by flying saucer expert Donald E. Keyhoe. The series was an elaboration of an earlier Keyhoe story about a flying female impersonator who dons his disguise and saves the day for his squadron.

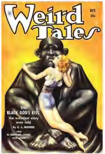
DUSTY AYRES AND HIS BATTLE BIRDS by Robert Sidney Bowen scored



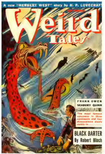
Copyright © 1934 Popular Pub Inc



Copyright © 1951 Fiction House Pub



Copyright © 1934 Popular Fiction Pub Co



Copyright © 1943 Weird Tales

a mere 7 kills for Popular Publications in 1934. He fought the Black Invaders and a deadly villain called Fire Eyes. TERENCE X. O'LEARY'S WAR BIRDS lasted but 3 issues in 1935. Written by Guy Empey for Dell, stories were shaped around death-ray machines, flying belts, monstrous rocketships, mad scientists and other Buck Rogers paraphenalia. Rudolph Belarsky did both covers and interiors. THE GRIFFON, a masked crime-fighter in the Green Hornet tradition who flew the Black Bullet, was authored by Arch Whitehouse. TAILSPIN TOMMY by Arnold Evan Ewart crashed into the pulp medium for 2 issues in 1936. PHINEAS PINKHAM was written by Joe Archibald. Even Les Dent penned a hangarful of flying fantasies.

G-8's closest rival, however, was BILL BARNES, AIR ADVENTURER who took off on February 1934. Penned by dime noveleers Chick Verral and Monty Montayne, Barnes, unlike his contemporaries who continued to fight WWI, was set in the present. With a group of loyal fellow pilots, he dedicated himself to advancing aeronautical concepts throughout the world (which naturally included plenty of action and antagonists).

Of special interest were the detailed schematic drawings of all the planes used in the stories. Artist Frank Tinsley, "invented" super-aircraft like the Bumblebee with its retractable wings, the Eaglet which could be launched from a flying hangar, the Porpoise that did everything including submerge, the Scarlet Stormer, the Silver Lancer and others. Tinsley's conceptions were believable and when *Barnes* became *Air Trails* then *American Modeler*, he began illustrating his theories for *Mechanix Illustrated.* He also produced a Bill Barnes type comic strip called CAPTAIN YANK.

But even the mechanized heroes had to bow to another whose stature and seniority swelled to that of an American folk hero. In October 1912, TARZAN OF THE APES killed his first lion with a full nelson in the pulp pages of *All-Story magazine.* And in his wake, came a flood of jungle novels like *The Beasts Of Tarzan, Tarzan And The Jewels Of Opar, Tarzan And The Lost Empire, Tarzan The Untamed* and others that totaled an even two dozen. Almost all were originally published in dime novels like *All-Story* (which would become *Argosy*), *Blue Book, Red Book, Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures.*

The jungle lord was, of course, written by the Jules Verne of the pulps, Edgar Rice Burroughs. Born in Chicago on September 1, 1875, Burroughs was the son of an ex-major in the Civil War. Impressed by his father's position, he graduated from the Michigan Military Academy, after which he served as a cavalryman, a cowpuncher, a storekeeper, a policeman and a gold miner.

Burroughs explained why he chose his craft, *"I was not writing because of any urge to write nor for any particular love of writing. I was writing because I had a wife and two babies...I loathed poverty, and I would have liked to put my hands on the party who said that poverty is an honorable estate."* He sold his first story, *A Princess Of Mars,* for $400 and *Tarzan* for $700.

Over the years, Burroughs imitated his own creation with tales about THANDAR in *The Cave Man,* BULAN in *The Monster Men,* TANAR of *Pellucidar* and NU, the prehistoric hunter in *The Eternal Lover.* Then came the JOHN CARTER on Mars stories, the PELLUCIDAR saga, CARSON NAPIER on Venus, *the Moon Maid* and *Land Time Forgot* trilogies, Indian tales like *War Chief* and *Apache Devil,* western yarns such as *The Bandit Of Hell's Bend* and *The Oakdale Affair,* and historical and mainstream novels like *The Mad King* and *The Girl From Hollywood.*

Burroughs' status is certainly one of massive success, one which must rank him as a pioneer of adventure fiction. Though his work is superficial by comparison, he has earned a hallowed place next to those who inspired him: Rudyard Kipling, Jules Verne, H. Rider Haggard, H. G. Wells. On March 19, 1950 Burroughs died in bed.

He was reading Tarzan in the Sunday comics.

Whether he knew it or not, Burroughs had spawned The Age of Armageddon in the pulps. Imitators loosed a torrent of Tarzan/Carter/Thandar variations. Otis Adelbert Kling authored *Tam, Son of the Tiger* and *Jan of the Jungle* and a batch of Mars and Venus stories. Ralph Milne Farley created Myles Cabot in *An Earthman On Venus.* J. Irving Crump introduced Jack Champion in *Sangroo The Sun-God* and *Og, Son of Fire* before doing the Jack Armstrong radio show. Robert Moore Williams penned the JONGOR (John Gordon) series. William Chester wrote tales about *Kioga, Hawk of the Wilderness.* Howard Browne added the THARN saga. They all made their initial appearances in the pulps, saving beautiful, scantily-clad maidens from monsters and thwarting planet shaking peril

In the fall of 1938, Fiction House, under their Bulls-Eye logo, offered *Jungle Stories* with KI-GOR in the lead tale. Flanked by his jungle mate Ann and his pygmy sidekick N'Geeso, the blond jungle lord stalked man and beast through his African veldt turf. Illustrators included Earl Mayan, Jim Mooney, H. B. Vestal, Nick Viscardi and J. P. Doolin. ARMLESS O'NEIL and Edgar Wallace's SAUNDERS OF THE RIVER also shared the book.

Robert Byrd's *King of Fang and Claw* introduced KA-ZAR for a 3 issue span in Martin Goodman's pulp line-up. Both Ka-Zar and Ki-Gor (changed to KAANGA) would have their comic equivalents. *Red Star Adventures* showcased a quartet of jungle yarns about MATALAA, the White Savage scripted by Martin McCall. *Thrilling Adventures* featured KWA in 8 tales of lost civilizations and African justice by Paul Regard.

Of all the authors to pursue the Burroughs tradition, Robert E. Howard was the most exceptional. Though Howard operated in the same area, he frequently topped Burroughs at his own game. Howard was a voracious dime novel reader. He applied the scope and epic quality found in the works of A. Merritt and Talbot Mundy to Burroughs lightning pacing and evolved not only another style but a new type of story.

For all practical purposes, Howard had created the sword and sorcery genre.

Of course William Morris had invented imaginary worldscapes in *The Wood Beyond The World* and other novels. Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison and James Branch Cabell had also contributed inspirational vistas of quests and crusades, of warfares and wonders, but it was Howard who brought it all up to date and served it as pure entertainment.

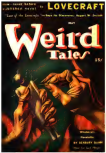
Howard's style was one of lustrous euphemism. His manuscripts were canvases upon which Howard applied the palatte of imagination to paint miraculous word pictures of heroic battles, supernatural terrors, epic conquests and flaming passions, glazed with vivid portraits of barbaric larger-than-life heroes. Where Burroughs' style was systemized, Howard's was lyrical. He was a born storyteller and he spun his yarns with driving force, colorful prose and dazzling speed.

Drawing from backgrounds of historical and mythological sources, Howard created BRAN MAK MORN, the warrior king who led his Pict army against the iron legions of imperial Rome. Next came SOLOMON KANE, the dour Puritan adventurer who blazed a trail through black magic, savages and maelfic witch doctors in Africa. He was followed by BRECKENRIDGE ELKINS, the man from Bear Creek.

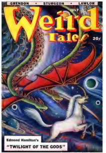
Then, he presented his version of Atlantis with the saga of KING KULL and finally his magnum opus, the legend of CONAN THE CIMMERIAN around which a new cult of followers has rallied due to Lancer's paperback series about the character.

Years earlier, Wally Wood had illustrated the Conan hard-bound editions and Gray Morrow had visualized him in an unpublished comic book version.

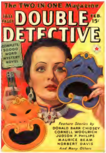
Howard was born in Texas in 1906 and grew up with a severely introverted personality, substituting books for baseball and fantasies for friends. While still


new—never before published novel by LOVECRAFT
"Last of the Lovecrafts"—Says its Discoverer, August W. Derleth
MAY
Weird Tales
15¢
Witchcraft Novelette
BY SEABURY QUINN

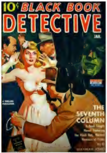
Copyright © 1941 Weird Tales



Copyright © 1948 Weird Tales



Copyright © 1938 Red Star Pub



Copyright © 1942 Better Pub Inc

in his teens, he sold his first stories to *Weird Tales* where the bulk of his work would appear. Writing in every field from fantasy to western to science fiction, Howard was extremely prolific. The loss of his mother threw him in a state of psychotic despair and on July 11, 1936, Howard took his own life. He was 30 years old.

Others swept in to take up the mantle of super-heroic pulp fantasy. Henry Kuttner served as scribe for ELAK of Atlantis, who swashbuckled his way through a handful of high sorcery tales. His wife, Catherine Moore produced tales about JIREL the flame-haired warrior-maid of Joiry. Both were shy, retiring individuals who collaborated on their stories. They developed an extraordinary rapport to the point where if one would stop typing a manuscript in the middle of a sentence, the other could take over and complete the very phrase and essence that was originally intended.

Pulp noveleer Norvell Page recounted the adventures of the red-bearded Northman PRESTER JOHN in the pages of Street & Smith's *Unknown.* Edmond Hamilton made his bid with the sword play saga *Kaldar, World of Antares* in the short run *Magic Carpet Magazine.* His wife Leigh Brackett teamed with Ray Bradbury to produce *Lorelei of The Red Mist* whose hero was also named Conan. L. Sprague De Camp and Fletcher Pratt penned the HAROLD SHEA stories that became *The Incomplete Enchanter.* Poul Anderson wrote about BRAM THE RED of Killorn. Jack Vance scripted *The Dying Earth.*

Following much the same route, Howard Phillips Lovecraft evolved yet another form of the sword and sorcery theme, often no sword and all sorcery. Lovecraft excelled in the realm of supernatural horror, the setting in which all his tales dwelled. Most of his work falls into two groupings, the Cthulhu Mythos about a race of evil gods held in check by benign deities, and the Kadath series about a bizarre world men can visit only in dreams. He also wrote a series of short stories about HERBERT WEST, Reanimator. Lovecraft sold 52 tales, most of which were tediously narrated in the first person.

H. P. Lovecraft was born in Rhode Island, August 20, 1890 and grew up through a sickly and sheltered childhood. He shunned personal relationships and did most of his business by mail. He received no recognition during his lifetime except from a hard core group of *Weird Tales* fans. On March 15, 1937, Lovecraft died of cancer. He has since been hailed as the successor to Edgar Allan Poe.

Lovecraft's contemporaries studded the pulps with similiar horrific fare, Clark Ashton Smith wrote *The Dark Eidolon,* Nictzin Dyalhis offered *The Sea Witch,* David Keller scripted *The Thing in The Cellar,* August Derleth produced *The Scarred Soul,* Robert Bloch presented *The Strange Island Of Dr. Nork,* Stanton Coblentz authored *The Will Of Raminchantra,* Seabury Quinn offered *Wake And Remember.* All seemed dedicated to the proposition that that which had never lived could not die.

Weird Tales spanned 32 years before it was buried forever.

Popular Publications, however, produced the most successful weird menace mags. Publisher Henry Steeger drew inspiration for his pulps from the Grand Guignol, Paris' theatre of horror that nightly exhibited extravaganzas of murder, mutilation and mayhem.

Dime Mystery Magazine was the first to don the new fright mask. Norvell Page contributed the lead tale, *Dance Of The Skeletons.* By 1935 they had issued two additional weird titles, *Horror Stories* and *Terror Tales.* Editor Rogers Terrill defined the emotion of horror as the feeling a girl would have witnessing a frightening incident at a safe distance; terror is when she realizes she is the next victim. Covers were macabre masterpieces of mad scientists brandishing surgical instruments, hunchbacked assistants clutching hypodermics, animated cadavers and slimy, scaly grotesqueries that lurked, leered and lusted at half-nude lovelies strapped to operating tables.

The dime noveleers launched a full scale Inquisition at the public. The magazines found they had been tagged *"The Bloody Pulps".*

Wyatt Blassingame served up *The Goddess Of Crawling Horrors,* Arthur Leo Zagat penned *House Of The Living Dead,* Hugh B. Cave fostered *The Corpse Maker,* John Knox wrote *The Man Out Of Hell,* John Flanders offered *If Thy Right Hand Offend Thee,* Robert C. Blackmon visioned *Our Grave Is Waiting,* Bruno Fischer presented *Burn, Lovely Lady,* Ralston Shields scripted *Little Miss Dracula,* Donald Graham produced *Revolt Of The Circus Freaks,* Leon Byrne composed *Help Me To Die.* They all lived up to their newly coined reputation.

Culture Publications countered with *Spicy Mystery* and *Spicy Detective.* Standard offered *Thrilling Mystery. Eerie Stories, Mystery Adventure, Eerie Mysteries, Mystery Novels* and *Ace Mystery* entered the race. Martin Goodman, who had begun publishing on a shoestring budget in 1932, now packaged 14 titles with a total circulation of 400,000. His pulps included *Mystery Tales, Uncanny Tales, Real Mystery* and *Marvel Tales,* all geared to a sex-sadism syndrome.

The formula was simple; tension, torture, torment and terror. Writers like Paul Ernst, Ray Cummings, Wayne Rodgers, Nat Schachner, John Hawkins, Chandler Whipple, Mindret Lord, L. Ron Hubbard, Leslie Charteris, John W. Vandercook, W. Wayne Robbins, G. T. Fleming-Roberts, James Duncan, Steve Fisher, Frederick C. Davis and others, many of whom became nationally prominent figures, began their careers in these pulps.

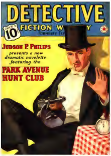
Authors were paid from ½ cent to as much as 5 cents a word, 1 cent being about average. Each month, every month 150,000 terror mags were being sold. Pulps grossed a total of $24 million annually. Though profit margins on a single issue were often as low as $500, publishers reaped income, parlayed profits, amassed fortunes. Writers pocketed their revenue and continued pounding their typewriters. One of the most prolific, Arthur J. Burks, called any week he earned less than $400 unsuccessful. He composed his stories directly on the typewriter at the rate of 15,000 words a day. Needless to say, Burks was a demon typist. He recalled his by-line once appeared on the covers of 11 magazines the same month. Burks almost killed himself for years, trying to make it 12. He never did.

All these writers, and dozens more, were equally adept at drafting "straight" crime fiction. The detective story was extremely popular and took a back seat only to the Western tale. Both, however, shared equally the credit for being the foundation upon which the pulp empire was built.

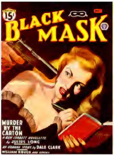
The proof is evident in the amount of titles: *Detective Action, Action Detective, Fast Action Detective, Double Action Detective, Crack Detective, Smashing Detective, Hollywood Detective, Nickle Detective, Dime Detective, Double Detective, Triple Detective, Ten Detective Aces, Private Detective, Famous Detective, Crime Busters, G-Man, Gang World, Black Aces, Underworld Love, Clues* and dozens more. *Detective Fiction Weekly* and *Black Mask* headed the pack and ultimately changed the direction of crime fiction from one of ho-hum urban gentility to brass knuckles impudence.

Crime, of course, is as ancient as man's own history. Remember Cain and Abel? Crime's literary traditions have been almost as long and equally as honorable. The detective story proper found its way into the Jewish *Apocryph, Herodotus* and the *Aeneid,* and into Voltaire's *Zadig.* Even Shakespeare dabbled in crime and high passion in *Macbeth.*

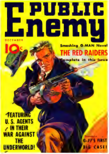
But it was Edgar Allan Poe who laid down the rules of the modern detective story in a series of 5 tales that began with *The Murders In The Rue Morgue.* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle picked up that thread and wrote *A Study In Scarlet* for England's pulp-sized *Strand Magazine.* The master of deductive reasoning, SHERLOCK HOLMES, and his sidekick Dr. Watson, dazzled readers in a cavalcade of crime charades that featured



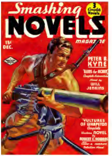
Copyright © 1938 Red Star Pub


15¢
BLACK MASK
MURDER BY THE CARTON
A BEN CORBETT NOVELETTE by JULIUS LONG
AN OHANNA STORY by DALE CLARK
WILLIAM ROUGH AND OTHERS

Copyright © 1946 Fictioneers Inc



Copyright © 1935 Dell Pub


Smashing NOVELS MAGAZINE
3 Complete Novels
15¢
DEC.
PETER B. KYNE
"GUNS for ACTION" Complete Adventure Novel by
WILL JENKINS
"VULTURES OF WHAPETON" Complete Western NOVEL by ROBERT E. HOWARD
Also a complete Detective Novel

Copyright © 1936 Chesterfield Pub

superfoe Professor Moriarity.

Then NICK CARTER appeared in Street & Smith's *New York Weekly* on September 18, 1886 and proceeded to occupy a number of publications through the years until his *Nick Carter Stories* mag was changed to *Detective Story* in 1915. Tales by Edgar Wallace, Carolyn Wells, Sax Rohmer and Johnston McCulley later edged him out of that book and into *Shadow Magazine* fillers written by Bruce Elliott.

The big change in detective fiction had started after WWI. Realism took the form of detached cynicism and began to erode the curt, romantic approach that existed. Polite conversation gave way to tough, trenchant dialogue with the burning cold quality of a chunk of dry ice. Characterizations tended to reveal the flaws in the personalities of the players. Action replaced intellectualism.

"Elementary, my dear Watson," was superseded by *"'Shut your mouth, damn you,' the Brain greeted, 'Or I'll cook you right now!.'"* By the time the depression had rolled around, the public had learned to welcome the hardbitten, hardboiled philosophy the pulp private dicks offered and accepted it as their own.

Black Mask was, of course, nothing more than a title around which clustered the elite of the crime novel trade. Those men created their own literary tradition, one that will unquestionably endure as long as the detective. RACE WILLIAMS was the first private investigator to graduate from the tough guy school in the early 1920's. His author Carroll John Daly was once arrested by New York Police for carrying a concealed .45 automatic while somewhat intoxicated. Daly wrote for comics at the end of his career.

Dashiell Hammett was one of the most famous *Black Mask* writers. An ex-detective (he once busted a $200,000 gold heist) for the Pinkerton Agency, Hammett created the CONTINENTAL OP, a nameless operative for the fictitious Continental Detective Agency. In 1929 he offered a tale about a jewel-studded statue called *The Maltese Falcon* which introduced private eye SAM SPADE. With the help of Bogart who played the lead in John Huston's 1941 production, it has since become the definitive crime classic. It had been filmed twice before.

Next, Hammett chalked up THE THIN MAN, around which another series was filmed starring William Powell. Then he wrote Secret Agent X-9. He spent some of his life as a Hollywood screenwriter, part of it in jail, much of it as an alcoholic and most of it as a sick man. Late in his life Hammett had purchased an expensive crossbow that he wanted very much, even though he couldn't afford it without giving up something else. Friends were visiting him at that time, and Hammett spent the afternoon with their 10 year old son, playing with the weapon. The child was shattered when he had to go; he had fallen in love with the crossbow as children will. Hammett put the device in the back seat of the car with the little boy and waved him goodbye. When he was asked why, Hammett summed up his philosophy, one that recurred throughout his boosk, *"The kid wanted it more. Things belong to people who want them most."* He died in 1961.

Erle Stanley Gardner was another *Black Mask* alumnus. He had begun as a short story writer in 1921, scripting tales about a reformed crook named Ed Jenkins and an intellectual private cop called LESTER LEITH. His work began appearing with increasing frequency, and in 1933 he sold 60 stories plus his first novel, *The Case Of The Velvet Claws*. His PERRY MASON became the American Sherlock Holmes. When he passed away in 1970, Gardner left a legacy of almost 140 novels and countless short stories.

In 1933 *Black Mask* editor Joseph T. Shaw bought *Blackmailers Don't Shoot* from a 45 year old businessman by the name of Raymond Chandler. His private investigators, John Dalmas and Mallory became PHILIP MARLOWE in *The Big Sleep* with Bogart again in the film version. Chandler's prose was violent yet lyrical. His style was literate but not heavy-handed. Plots were often so complex even he sometimes forgot who did it!

Chandler reviewed pulp thrillers like this: *"Their characters lived in a world gone wrong, a world in which, long before the atom bombs, civilization had created the machinery for its own destruction and was learning to use it with all the moronic delight of a gangster trying out his first machine gun."*

Chandler wrote a total of 7 novels and two dozen short stories during his career. His method of working was painstakingly articulate, with continuous rewriting until the final result was produced. Chandler also graduated to Hollywood as a screenwriter with credits that include *Farewell My Lovely, Lady In The Lake, Double Indemnity* and *Strangers On A Train.*

Hammett, Gardner and Chandler were the heavy artillery of the Black Detective era. Others like Raoul Whitfield, who recounted the adventures of Filipino detective JO GAR, and Frederick Nebel with his MACBRIDE yarns, were equally as competent. So was John K. Butler, STEVE MIDNIGHT's raconteur; Lester Dent with his Miami gumshoe OSCAR SAIL and CLICK RUSH, the gadget man; W. T. Ballard and his Hollywood troubleshooter BILL LENNOX; George Harmon Coxe who chronicaled FLASHGUN CASEY, crime photographer; Norbert Davis who inaugurated his private dick MAX LATIN; Robert Reeves who squired the offbeat CELLINI SMITH. Then there was Maxwell Grant with his tricky NORGIL the Magician stories; Ted Tindsley who reported CARRIE CASHIN, girl detective; Norvell Page with DICK BARRETT and his old maid secretary Miss Fay; Steve Fisher's "BIG RED" BRENNAN of Naval Intelligence; and Laurence Donovan with his "BOXCAR" REILLY tales.

Black Mask recorded the sagas of Angel Allen, Bail-Bond Dodds, Black Burton, Bookie Barnes, Cash Wale, Candid Jones, Daffy Dill, Detective Slabbe, Ed Migrane, Keyhole Kerry, The Marquis Of Broadway, Red Drake, Rex Sackler, Satan Hall and Senor Lobo–all blackjack tough, quick-trigger witted Sherlocks. Quite a few made it into the movies, radio or TV series.

It seemed that working for *Black Mask* brought out the savage in writers. They all took the same approach. *"'Block off the coupe,' he told his driver, pointing down the street to where the black car had whispered into the curb.*

"They oozed up alongside it. The street lamp washed the wrong way. Slabbe couldn't make out the guy's features. He got out, opened the coupe door.

"The man behind the wheel hit Slabbe's hand twice with a sap. Slabbe grunted in pain, balled his fist and drove it on in, held it at the end of its journey, spearing the man against the seat like a bug on a pin. He rapped the sap free, pulled the man out.

"The man hit him in the stomach, fast, four times. Slabbe was annoyed."

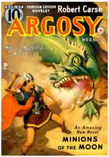
Frank Gruber was another screenwriter who apprenticed in the dime novels. His terse tales about JOHNNY FLETCHER, JIM STRONG, SIMON LASH and OLIVER QUADE the human encyclopedia, filled countless pages in the Black Detective pulps. When the desk clerk of his 44th Street hotel jammed the lock of his room with the broken bit of a soft metal key, Gruber wrote his first crime novel around it, *The French Key.*

When things were really tough, Gruber would eat for free at the automat. "*You got a bowl intended for soup, went over to the hot water nozzle and filled up your bowl. You sidled along to where you got the soup and picked up a couple of glassine bags of crackers (free), supposedly to go with the soup. You now went to one of the tables, sat down and crumbled the crackers into the hot water. Every table had a bottle of ketchup. You emptied about half of the ketchup into the hot water and cracker mixture. Presto-tomato soup!*

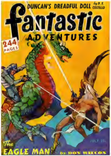
"Cost? Nothing.

"I sometimes had tomato soup four or five times a day."

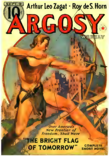
The *Black Mask* success prompted other publishers to follow up with a



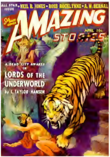
Copyright © 1939 Red Star Pub


DUNCAN'S DREADFUL DOLL by P. F. COSTELLO
fantastic ADVENTURES
244 PAGES
JULY 25¢
The EAGLE MAN by DON WILCOX

Copyright © 1942 Ziff Davis Pub


SEPT. 9
10¢
Arthur Leo Zagat · Roy de S. Horn
ARGOSY
WEEKLY
Over America's New Frontier of Freedom, Shall Wave
"THE BRIGHT FLAG OF TOMORROW"
COMPLETE SHORT NOVEL

Copyright © 1939 Red Star Pub.



Copyright © 1941 Ziff Davis Pub Co

legion of the most unlikely lawmen who ever prowled the crime jungle. One of the first was veteran novelist John Kobler's PETER QUEST who debuted in *Merchant Of Damnation.* Quest's hang-up was not fear of death but a fear of life. Stricken with glaucoma, he'd suffer temporary blindness in each tale. The thought of permanent sightlessness terrified him.

Nat Schachner scribed stories about amnesia victim NICHOLAS STREET, named after the place he was found. Detective DAN HOLDEN'S hearing had been destroyed by a gunman's bullet, yet, in his saga by Leon Byrne, no one including his secretary knew he was deaf. Holden was an expert lip reader, a talent he took advantage of in his cases.

Edith and Ejler Jacobson created NAT PERRY, the bleeder, a pale, pallid private eye on whom the slightest scratch could mean death. Tales inevitably pitted the hemophiliac sleuth against dangers aimed at his affliction.

Another was BEN BRYN the victim of infantile paralysis who peddled newspapers and shoelaces on a skid-with wheels. Bruno Fischer, writing under the pseudonym "Russell Gray," revealed this *"put tremendous power into his arms and iron into his soul."* CALVIN KANE was another deformed detective by Fischer. Kane sidled along like a crab dragging his withered right leg behind as he set out to solve his mysteries.

Others that made a pitch for popularity were JIM BIG-KNIFE, Stewart Sterling's Kwanee Blackfoot investigator; Wyatt Blassingame's JOE GEE, an insomniac who couldn't sleep while on a case; PENDEXTER RIDDLE, the extraordinary question mark by Loring Dowst; Ralph Oppenheim's DANIEL CRAIG, the bystander; and Dale Clark's GHOSTLY JONES, the poltergeist sleuth.

They were all about as appealing as a pack of sideshow freaks, yet in the purple prose of the pulp thrillers they found acceptance. Why? Perhaps because, even though they lacked the elements necessary for transcendental meditation, they could allow a brief suspension from the pressures of a depression-torn nation. Or maybe they showed that freaks did exist in our world, even closer than we supposed.

The pulp story represented the commonest of escape literature. Compared to the dilemnas encountered in the dime novels, the challenge of day-to-day existence did indeed seem pale. The elemental struggles and eventual victories vivified the determination of American youth caught in the stress of living. Pulp heroes held out the hope of personal achievement to every red-blooded American who could afford a dime. And in those days a dime might as well have been a dollar.

There were pulps to appeal to every interest. The ladies had *Hollywood Tattler, Lovers, Popular Screen, Candid Confessions, Glamorous Love Stories, Love Book* and others. Titles like *Railroad, Sports Novels, Knockout, New Astrology, Focus, Saucy Detective, Under Fire War Stories, South Sea Stories* and *Firefighters* appealed to a more offbeat audience.

The straight adventure story fashioned the most popular magazines: *Argosy, Top-Notch, All-Story, Short Stories, Blue Book, Adventure* and *Red Book.* These pulps had the longest runs, paid the most money, boasted the highest circulation and used the elite corps of fiction wordsmiths.

Stories were often set in historical or legendary backgrounds. Talbot Mundy rewrote the history of Greece and Rome with his TROS OF SAMOTHRACE epics, the OM stories and the compelling JIMGRIM saga. Edgar Rice Burroughs penned the TARZAN, Mars and Venus tales here. Abraham Merritt offered narratives like *The Ship of Ishtar* and *The Moon Pool,* which inspired a generation of neophyte authors. C. S. Forester reported the travels and triumphs of CAPTAIN HORATIO HORNBLOWER. HOPALONG CASSIDY and the Bar-20 hands blazed western trails from the pen of Clarence Mulford. Damon Runyon quilled a series of character studies set in the Broadway/Bowery locale. Max Brand recorded the DR. KILDARE novels. Johnston McCulley related the adventures of ZORRO.

The caliber of the art was equally fine, with contributors like Charles Davis Mitchell, Harold James Mowat, Frank E. Schoonover, Art Fuller, John Richard Flanagan, Amos Sewell, John Clymer, Walter Baumhofer, John Falter, Tom Lovell, Frederick Trench Chapman, Nich Eggenhofer, John Russel Fulton, Philip Lyford and Herbert Morton Stoops.

The books were two-fisted treasuries about foreign legionaires, Northwest mounties, revolutionary war soldiers, racing car drivers, gold prospectors, Indian fighters, riverboat captains, oil riggers, civil war militias, great white hunters, buccaneers, deep-sea divers, outlaws and lawmen, submarine crews, arctic explorers, Yankee clipper captains and any other mixture of danger and drama the writers could dream up.

Teaser blurbs never failed to grab the reader's interest. *"The fog came down off Barney Bay, and the wind and the sea were the only law, and on the heaving bosom of the gray widow-maker anything could happen–including murder".*

Or *"He knew little of life, nothing of death except what he read in books–until the day Luigi Caradosso gave him sword and dagger and told him to see the color of a tyrant's blood."*

Or *"They'll leave yuh grounded on the shoals of grief!' Skipper Pring told Smeed, gazing at the trader's gallery of cardboard courtesans. And damned if they didn't up and pin a murder rap on him just a week later."*

Or *"The Corsican Sultan and his officers had never heard the Arabian proverb which says: 'If you meet a Hazrami and a cobra in your path, spare the cobra!'"*

Or *"Swords under the moon, and dead man's gold, and a lean-ship flying the Black Roger–these are the heritage of fighting Flag McCord, who comes back to claim his birthright."*

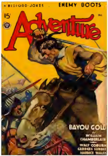
Writers like Frank Gruber, William B. Cameron, Georges Surdez, Steve Fisher, Jim Kjelgaard, R. W. Daly, Walt Coburn, Donald Barr Chidsey, H. Bedford-Jones, Luke Short, W. C. Tuttle, Lawrence Treat and F. R. Buckley crammed countless accounts of action onto the pulp pages.

Adventure and pulp magazines were synonymous. Their best stories were as good as any being published today and the worst no poorer than what some modern authors try to palm off as contemporary writing. One area in particular has endured the element of time without looking dated. Leo Margulies, the dynamic helmsman of Standard Publications, put it this way, *"For every single copy of the gray and brown covered magazines devoted to the grim and deadly school of literature, there are some 300,000 copies of periodicals dedicated to the Western story. It is Uncle Sam's contribution to high adventure."*

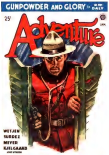
The statement was no exaggeration. The Western story and the dime novel began together in the mid-1800's with romanticised versions of Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp and Jesse James. Each helped shape the form and content of the other in their ensuing development until both became landmarks in the American tradition.

By the time the pulp era was in full force, the Western saga dominated. Anyone with a dime and a hankerin' for action picked from titles like *Western Rangers, Star Western, Mavericks, Bullseye Western, Rangeland Love, Ace High, Western, Pioneer Western, .44 Western, Western Raider, Pecos Kid Western, Quick-Trigger Western, Outlaws of the West, Western Trails, Golden West, Pete Rice Western, Buck Jones Western, Frontier Stories, Blue Ribbon Western, West, Texas Rangers, Range Riders Western, Rio Kid Western, Giant Western, Western Rodeo Romances* and *Masked Rider Western.* And these were only a fraction of the titles available which verified the fact that the Western novel was an exclusive product of the pulps.

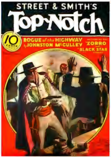
Covers were colorful compositions of leather-tough desperadoes and frontiers-


H. BEDFORD-JONES
ENEMY BOOTS
15¢
Adventure
BAYOU GOLD by WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN
WALT COBURN
GEORGES SURDEZ
MAURICE WALSH

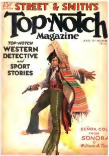
Copyright © 1938 Popular Pub Inc


GUNPOWDER AND GLORY by S.W. DALY
25¢
Adventure
JAN.
WETJEN
SURDEZ
MEYER
KJELGAARD
and others

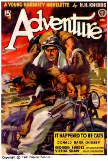
Copyright © 1947 Popular Pub Inc


STREET & SMITH'S
Top-Notch
10 cents
ROGUE of the HIGHWAY
JOHNSTON McCULLEY
ZORRO
BLACK STAR

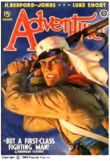
Copyright © 1932 Street & Smith Pub Inc


15¢
STREET & SMITH'S
Top-Notch
Magazine
APR. 15th NUMB 1932
TOP-NOTCH
WESTERN
DETECTIVE
and
SPORT
STORIES
SEÑOR COL
FROM
SONORA
by
William A. To

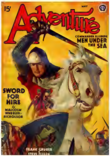
Copyright © 1932 Street & Smith Pub Inc


A YOUNG HARDESTY NOVELETTE by H.H. KNIBBS
15¢
Adventure
JAN.
IT HAPPENED TO BE CATS
DONALD BARR CHIDSEY
GEORGES SURDEZ
VICTOR SHAW

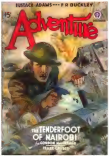
Copyright © 1941 Popular Pub Inc


H. BEDFORD-JONES • • • LUKE SHORT
15¢
AUGUST
Adventure
-BUT A FIRST-CLASS FIGHTING MAN!
by GEORGES SURDEZ

Copyright © 1940 Popular Pub Inc


15¢
MAY
Adventure
COMMANDER ELLSBERG
MEN UNDER THE SEA
SWORD FOR HIRE
by
MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON
FRANK GRUBER

Copyright © 1939 Popular Pub Inc


EUSTACE ADAMS --- F R BUCKLEY
15¢
Adventure
THE TENDERFOOT OF NAIROBI
by GORDON MacCREAGH
FRANK GRUBER

Copyright © 1940 Popular Pub Inc

men, jail-bustin' outlaws and rugged star-packers, homesteaders and hard-ridin' ranchers engrossed in their favorite pastime, shootin' it out in a cloud of dust with a hail of lead whistling around them. The stories were equally as colorful.

"Newt swallowed again, and Conbelt growled something at him in an undertone. It was obvious that Cal's buying chips in the game had thrown Newt off-stride, for he cut an anxious glance at the clock whose loud ticking was suddenly audible throughout the room. He scowled and tried to stiffen his features, but that clock was cutting away the minutes in which he could be certain of this professional gunman's protection. Through a moment's silence each tick seemed to deepen the tension in his face.

"Suddenly he flung his scowl at Conbelt. 'Damn you, Calhoun's no threat to me! What're you waiting for?'

"Conbelt slapped his hands flatly on the table and came up. Newt rose in a cautious twist. A bleak despair running through him, Rand let his feet spread slightly. He had pulled his thumb free, but his hand stayed by his belt. Conbelt kept his hands still but the fingers were hooked downward as he stepped clear of the table. Rand had both men to watch, and Cal wasn't due for another five or six minutes.

"Conbelt paced around the table and came into the clear where he halted. He stared across at Rand. 'The Kid's right. Calhoun's cheap heroics ain't nothing to me. Newt and me've been pards. His squabbles is my squabbles. Fill your hand, Joplin, or tuck your tail and get outta here.'

"Then the man's clawing hands went down for his guns.

"The right one had barely cleared its holster and the other hadn't started when Rand slapped the butt of his gun. He eared back, pulled and squeezed the trigger as the barrel swung up from the leather. His draw was cooler than Conbelt's showy double motion, and so was a shade faster. He heard the gunman's bullet whip past his ear even as his own gun's roar rocked across the big room."

Authors fashioned names for themselves even tougher than the protagonists in their tales. There was Luke Short, Clay Randall, Giff Cheshire, Del Rayburn, Ernest Haycox, Bradford Scott, Jackson Cole, Scott Leslie, Jay Lucas, Raoul Whitfield, Joseph Hook, Giles Lutz, Cliff Farrell, Wade Everett, Jonas Ward, Bliss Lomax, Charles Marquis Warren, Harry Sinclair Drago, William Colt MacDonald, Ross Taylor and Zane Grey.

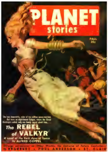
Unquestionably, the leader of the pack was Frederick Faust. His public knew him as Max Brand or one of the other 19 names with which he chose to sign his work. Faust was born in 1892, raised in California and wrote most of his stories on his 7 acre, 22 room villa estate in Florence, Italy. Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence were his neighbors.

Faust was a goliath of a man, 6'4" tall, weighing about 200 pounds with an enormous capacity for food and drink. During his few years as a Hollywood film writer, during which he earned about $2000 a week, he would bring a quart thermos full of whiskey to work which would be finished by noon. Lunch consisted of a dozen or more drinks. Occasional trips to a nearby saloon helped pass the afternoon. Then at 5:30 he'd head home for supper and some serious drinking. Faust could hold his liquor and was a drinking man to the core. But, he was not a drunk.

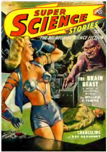
He did everything in a big way. His contemporaries labeled him undisputed "King of the Pulps." His rate was an unheard of five to ten cents a word. His volatile verbiage totaled 22,000,000 words which break down into 196 novels, 226 novelettes, 162 stories, 44 poems and 56 motion pictures including the Dr. Kildare and Destry series. Faust was a disciplinarian whose credo was to produce 14 typewritten pages every day of every month of every year. He did it for 30 years and matched even the voluminous output of Edgar Wallace, E. Philips Oppenheim and J. S. Fletcher.

Though he produced science fiction, crime and adventure fiction, his greatest contribution was to the western field. Yet the only time he was on a horse, he fell off and broke his leg. Faust's greatest disappointment was the fact that he was never recognized as the poet he wanted to be. A man of high literary purpose, he spent mornings in his tower study seated at an antique table that once served in a benedictine monastery. Using a quill pen, he'd write, in long hand, poetry influenced by everyone from Sophocles to Shakespeare. *Dionysus In Hades* was his epic masterwork; he published it himself in 1931.

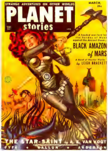
At age 52, Faust decided to become a war correspondent and wangled an assignment from *Harper's Magazine.* He outfitted himself at Abercrombie & Fitch and left for the Italian front hoping to contribute whatever he could of his talents to the war effort and, perhaps, collect material for a war novel. A few weeks later, Faust was killed by a shell fragment. A year hasn't gone by since that his books haven't been honored by new editions with which to satisfy the appetites of present generations. His legacy will doubtlessly


PLANET stories
FALL 20¢
The REBEL of VALKYR
A novel of the Dark Ages of Space by ALFRED COPPEL
BRADBURY • POUL ANDERSON • ST. CLAIR

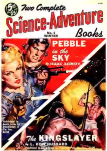
Copyright © 1950 Love Romances Pub Co Inc


JULY
SUPER SCIENCE STORIES
THE BRAIN BEAST
CHANGELING by RAY BRADBURY

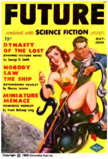
Copyright © 1949 Fictioneers Inc


STRANGE ADVENTURES ON OTHER WORLDS
MARCH 25¢
PLANET stories
BLACK AMAZON of MARS
by LEIGH BRACKETT
THE STAR-SAINT by A. E. VAN VOGT
FYFE • GALLUN • ANDERSON

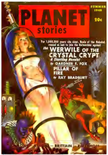
Copyright © 1951 Love Romances Pub Co Inc


Two Complete Science-Adventure Books
No. 1 WINTER
PEBBLE in the SKY by ISAAC ASIMOV
The KINGSLAYER by L. RON HUBBARD

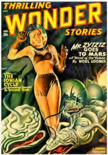
Copyright © 1950 Wings Pub Co Inc


FUTURE
combined with SCIENCE FICTION
15¢
MAY-JUNE
DYNASTY OF THE LOST
by George O. Smith
NOBODY SAW THE SHIP
by Murray Leinster
MINIATURE MENACE
by Frank Belknap Long

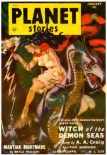
Copyright © 1950 Columbia Pub.Inc.


PLANET stories
SUMMER 1948
20¢
The WERWILE OF THE CRYSTAL CRYPT
by GARDNER F. FOX
PILLAR OF FIRE
by RAY BRADBURY
BRITTAIN

Copyright © 1948 Love Romances Pub. Co. Inc.


THRILLING WONDER STORIES
MR. ZYTZTZ GOES TO MARS
by NOEL LOOMIS
THE IONIAN CYCLE
by WILLIAM TENN

Copyright © 1948 Standard Magazine Inc.


PLANET stories
JANUARY 20¢
WITCH of the DEMON SEAS
A Novel by A. A. Craig
Also POUL ANDERSON
ALFRED COPPEL • M. L. COE
MARTIAN NIGHTMARE
by BRYCE WALTON

Copyright © 1950 Love Romances Pub.Co.Inc

endure longer than most of today's highly celebrated novels.

The western genre was never as popular in the comics due to the lack of artists who could convincingly portray its elements. Films capitalized on the western saga. So comics looked elsewhere for a reserve upon which to draw their sum and substance...and found it in the science fiction pulps.

The subject of fantasy has occupied a place in the thoughts and dreams of men since the beginning, from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* to *Midsummer Night's Dream* to *Gulliver's Travels*. H. G. Wells, Ambrose Bierce, Fitz-James O'Brien, Mark Twain, Olaf Stapleton and Jules Verne put the "science" into "science-fiction." They are the founders of the S-F themes: space travel, time travel, robots (a term coined by Karel Capek in *R.U.R.)*, other worlds, aliens, fantastic inventions and, of course, supermen.

Hugo Gernsback was the first to establish pulp magazines (March 1926) specifically catering to this trade, *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories*. The books measured 8½" x 11½", were published monthly and sold for 25 cents, then 15 cents. Matching quarterlies went for 50 cents, then 25 cents. A blurb on the editorial page proclaimed *"Prophetic fiction is the mother of scientific fact."*

The term science-fiction would not exist for quite a few years. Any offbeat tale, from the supernatural to interplanetary adventure, was classified as "pseudo-science." Covers inevitably visualized mammoth super-machines and fantastic baroque rockets that always slanted from corner to corner.

Early sci-fi noveleers included Ray Cummings, John Campbell, Jr., A. Hyatt Verrill, P. Schuyler Miller, Edmond Hamilton, John Taine, Jack Williamson, Stanton Coblentz, Clark Ashton Smith, Murray Leinster, Julian Huxley, Manley Wade Wellman, Nat Schachner, Laurence Manning, David Keller and the foremost space opera raconteur, "Doc" Smith.

Born in Wisconsin in 1890, E. E. Smith, Ph.D. wrote the ultimate S-F adventure, the 6 part, 600,000 word LENSMAN saga. This and his SKYLARK series in 1928 set the pace for all cosmic thrillers yet to come. Each new development spread the action into succeeding galaxies; each book transcended those for still larger super-universes. In short, he blueprinted every Buck Rogers character and situation to follow.

In 1934 Jack Williamson followed in Smith's footsteps with his *Legion of Space* trilogy in which he converted Dumas' *Three Musketeers* to the science fiction format. Less than twenty years later he would adapt his *Seetee Ship* novels to comic form and collaborate with Lee Elias to produce a minor but memorable Sunday page called BEYOND MARS. Two years later *Flash Gordon's Strange Adventure Magazine* hit the stands.

Will Jenkins writing under the name "Murray Leinster" produced science fiction in addition to western, crime and adventure tales in the pages of *Argosy*, *Thrill Book*, *Weird Tales* and *Astounding Stories*. Child prodigy John W. Campbell, Jr. added his own brand of super-science adventure to the growing roster of S-F authors with stories brimming with stray technological principles and offbeat laws of physics.

Amidst a generous sampling of imaginative yarns, Edmond Hamilton's CAPTAIN FUTURE novels were rallying points for an enthusiastic pulp audience. *"Curtis Newton, the young man known to the whole Solar System as Captain Future, made no answer. He was intently maneuvering the spectroscope that was trained on the comet through a port.*

"'There is a solid nucleus inside that comet, Simon,' he exclaimed finally, raising his head in excitement. 'We're going inside!'

"Curt Newton's figure was bathed in the comet's glare of now harmless white radiance that came through the filtering parts.

"He was lean and rangy, six feet four in height, with the wide shoulders and narrow hips of a fighting man. Under his torchlike mop of red hair was a space-bronzed face. Its handsome features and keen gray eyes bore the stamp of brilliant intelligence, a powerful will and a gay, rollicking humor.

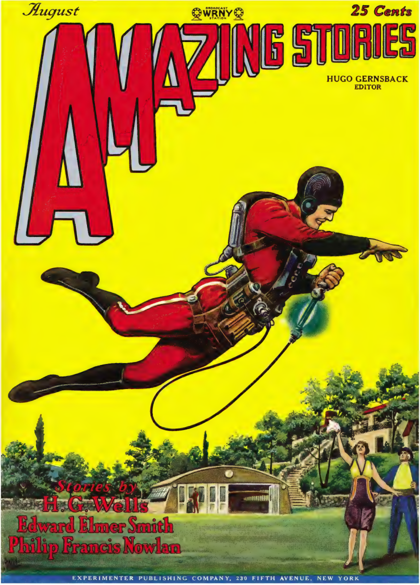
"Curt wore a zipper-suit of dark synthe silk with a flat gray tungstite belt. From a holster of black Plutonian leather protruded the well-worn butt of a stubby proton pistol. On his left hand he wore a ring whose nine "planet jewels" revolved slowly around a central "Sun" jewel. That was the unique identifying insignia of Captain Future.

"'What about it, Simon?' Curt eagerly asked the Futureman beside him. 'Think we can get inside that comet without cracking up?'

"Simon Wright, the Futureman he had addressed, answered in a rasping metallic voice.

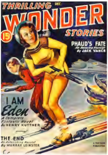
"'It'll be dangerous, lad. But we can try it.'

"Simon Wright was known all over the System as the Brain. For that was precisely what he was—a human brain living in a transparent serum case equipped with solutions, pumps and

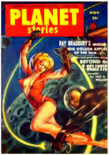

August
BROADCAST WRNY STATION
25 Cents
AMAZING STORIES
HUGO GERNSBACK
EDITOR
Stories by
H. G. Wells
Edward Elmer Smith
Philip Francis Nowlan
EXPERIMENTER PUBLISHING COMPANY, 230 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

Copyright © 1927 Experimenter Pub. Co

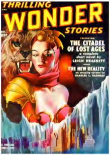
The original Buck Rogers cover


THRILLING WONDER STORIES
DEC
15¢
PHAUD'S FATE
An Amazing Novelet
By JACK VANCE
I AM Eden
A complete Fantastic Novel
By HENRY KUTTNER
THE END
An Astonishing Novelet
By MURRAY LEINSTER
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

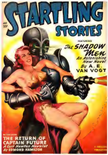
Copyright © 1946 Standard Magazine Inc


PLANET stories
NOV. 25¢
RAY BRADBURY'S
THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN
BEYOND the ECLIPTIC
by FOX B. HOLDEN

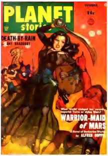
Copyright © [illegible]


THRILLING WONDER STORIES
THE CITADEL OF LOST AGES
a complete short novel by LEIGH BRACKETT
THE NEW REALITY
by CHARLES L. HARNESS
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

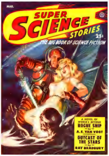
Copyright © [illegible]


STARTLING STORIES
JAN 25¢
FEATURING
The SHADOW Men
An Astonishing New Novel
By A. E. VAN VOGT
THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN FUTURE
A Curt Newton Novelet
By EDMOND HAMILTON
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

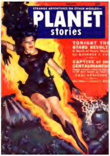
Copyright © 1949 Better Pub Inc


PLANET stories
SUMMER 20¢
DEATH-BY-RAIN
by RAY BRADBURY
WARRIOR-MAID of MARS
A Novel of Barbarian Worlds
by ALFRED COPPEL

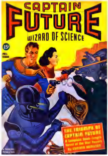
Copyright © 1950 Love Romance Pub Co Inc


MAR.
SUPER SCIENCE STORIES
25¢
THE BIG BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION
A NOVEL OF WORLDS BEYOND
ROGUE SHIP
by
A. E. VAN VOGT
OUTCAST OF THE STARS
by
RAY BRADBURY

Copyright © 1950 Fictioneers Inc


STRANGE ADVENTURES ON OTHER WORLDS—
PLANET stories
TONIGHT THE STARS REVOLT!
CAPTIVE of the CENTAURIANESS

Copyright © 1951 Love Romance Pub Co Inc


CAPTAIN FUTURE
WIZARD OF SCIENCE
15¢
THE TRIUMPH OF CAPTAIN FUTURE
A Complete Book-Length Novel of the Star Rovers
By EDMOND HAMILTON
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

Copyright © 1940 Better Pub Inc

purifiers. In the front of his square case were his glass lens eyes, mounted on flexible stalks, and the resonator with which he spoke. At the sides were his microphone ears.

"Once he had been a famous Earth scientist. His brain had been removed from his dying body. Now it lived and thought in that square case, yet only Captain Future was a greater scientist than the Brain.

"We may be able to slip through an opening in the comet,' he rasped to Curt. 'But if the comet touches our ship, it means sure death.'

"'Okay, we'll try it,' Curt Newton declared. 'Once we're inside, we can land on that solid nucleus and explore. I'll tell Otho.'

"The young, red-haired scientific wizard shouldered forward from the main laboratory cabin to the control room in the bow. Otho, the android, manipulated the control throttles. Grag, the robot, was playing with a small gray animal perched on his metal shoulder.

"'I'll take the throttles, Otho,' Curt announced. 'We're going to try to slip inside the comet.'"

Others like Eric Frank Russell, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Heinlein, L. Sprague De Camp, A. E. Van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Fritz Leiber, Henry Kuttner, Cliff Simak, Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke took their own directions to fashion the shape of science fiction's future.

Dozens of new titles sprang up like *Infinity, Galaxy, Imagination, Vortex, If, Venture, Analog, Fantastic, Beyond, Super Science, Planet, Startling Stories, Future Fiction* and *Out Of This World.* Some catered to steely-eyed heroes who cooked BEM's (bug-eyed monsters) with ray guns; others offered a more realistic outlook and viewed the S-F label as adult "speculative fiction."

Authors made esoteric breakthroughs in tales about unlimited atomic power, contra-universes, parallel worlds, multi-dimensional galaxies, time travel tales with accompanying irresolute paradoxes, incredible thinking machines, androids, robots, cyborgs, mutants, aliens, microcosmic worlds, advanced civilizations, super-beings, cosmic invasions, dying earths, galactic development, suspended animation, anti-matter worlds, cosmic quests, ultra-destructive weapons, interstellar travel and dozens of other concepts.

The public, at best, merely tolerated this type of literature. To many, it was tasteless, to others it was trash. V-2 rockets and atomic bombs changed their minds and gave them a new outlook on the 20th century. It was an outlook shared by all of us who had read the pulps for years.

The S-F and detective pulps managed to hang on and are still in existence today. *Black Mask* has become *Ellery Queen's Detective Magazine. Astounding* changed its name to *Analog* and continues to advance the philosophy of the future. Love pulps have been altered to slick magazine format, but the content remains essentially the same. Dime novel heroes continue to turn up in paperbacks from time to time. As a cumulative body, they etched their own place in the history of American culture.

Notables like James Cain, Theodore Dreiser, Cornell Woolrich, Irving Stone, Mignon Eberhart, Horatio Alger, John Macdonald and a host of others were the alumnae of the dime novels.

Like most popular entertainment mediums, the pulps had their detractors. In 1936, the *New York Times* leveled an indictment at the dime novels based on a charge made by a Connecticut school teacher who claimed 90% of the students read the thrillers. *"The matter of pulps,"* she accused, *"constitutes a menace to pupil's morals, English and mind."*

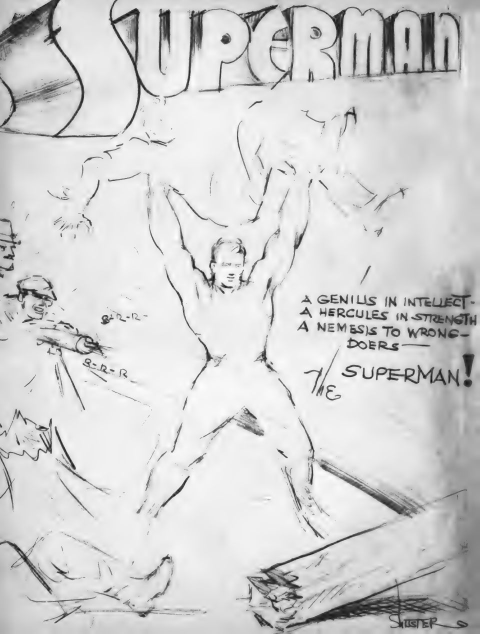
More editorial adversity followed and succeeded in little more than stirring up a storm of protest and controversy both pro and con. But those who insisted the pulps would continue ad infinitum made the mistake of ignoring the erosion of progress. The times were changing. Cars were going faster, so were trains and planes. Assembly lines and automation began to spread through industry. Living, in general, had accelerated considerably. Pulp publishers searched for a new way to show their wares and discovered the comic book.

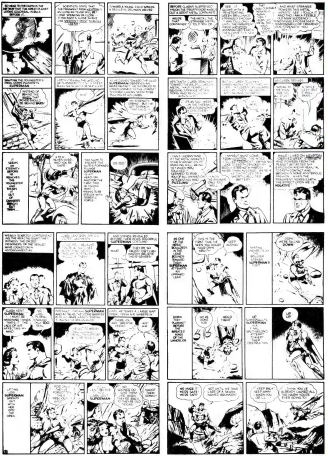
Comics could tell a story faster and with less intellectual drag on the reader. Almost at once, they converted to the new medium.

Pulp major-domo Martin Goodman applied the dime novel formula to his Timely Comics. So did Fiction House and turned their *Planet, Jungle* and *Wings* pulps into comic titles. Standard Publications applied their "thrilling" and "startling" adjectives to the Nedor comics group. Fawcett followed suit. Donenfeld switched from pulps to comics. Artists and writers did likewise and massed their talents for the niagara of comics to be launched momentarily.

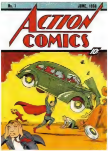
The pulp heroes had maintained a vast secret society for preserving law and order. Now their day was over. But the country still needed a good 10 cent hero.

The comic industry was officially about to be born! ■


SUPERMAN
B-R-R-
B-R-R
A GENIUS IN INTELLECT -
A HERCULES IN STRENGTH
A NEMESIS TO WRONG-
DOERS —
THE SUPERMAN!
SHUSTER


SO NEAR TO THE EARTH IS THE METEOR THAT THE GREAT PLANET LOOMS COLOSSAL IN BULK BEFORE IT...
SCIENTISTS STATE THAT THE FRAGMENT FROM KRYPTON IS AS CLOSE AS IT EVER WILL BE! --AND SPEAKING OF CLOSE-- IF YOU WANT A CLOSE SHAVE USE MERTON'S MOIST SHAVING CREAM!
TOWARD A YOUNG CHILD SPEEDS A RECKLESS, DRUNKEN DRIVER
SIGHTING THE YOUNGSTER'S PERIL, DOWN PLUMMETS SUPERMAN!
INSTEAD OF BEHIND THE WHEEL THAT DRIVER SHOULD BE BEHIND BARS!
WHAT
AS HE DASHES TOWARD THE CHILD SUPERMAN OBSERVES AN AMAZING FACT. HE IS FORCED TO STRAIN HIMSELF TO THE UTMOST! INVISIBLE CHAINS SEEM TO BE PULLING AT HIS LIMBS
MY STRENGTH - EBBING! BUT I'VE GOT TO REACH THAT CHILD--!
IT SEEMS AN ETERNITY BEFORE HE REACHES THE YOUNGSTER AND TOSSES IT OUT OF DANGER'S REACH! BUT THEN...
A FEW INCHES OVER-- AND YOU'RE SAFE!
TOO SLOW TO ESCAPE THE AUTO'S FORWARD PLUNGE SUPERMAN IS HIT HEAD-ON AND FOR THE FIRST TIME HE KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE STRUCK WITH TERRIFIC FORCE!
BEFORE CLARK'S SURPRISED VISION THE PROFFESSOR WHEELS OUT A GREAT METAL CONTAINER
INSIDE THAT CONTAINER
THE METAL THE STRANGE METAL I TOLD YOU OF
SEE IT GLOWS WITH A PENETRATING GREEN BRILLIANCE! STRANGELY ENOUGH IT WAS DULL ONLY UNTIL THE FRAGMENT FROM KRYPTON APPROACHED EARTH
THAT UNACCOUNTABLE WEAKNESS AGAIN THEN IT SEEMS THE METAL TOO HAILS FROM KRYPTON!
AND WHAT STRANGE POWERS THIS METAL IMPARTS! SEE, I TOUCH IT AND THO I AM A FEEBLE OLD MAN SUDDENLY I FIND MYSELF POSSESSED TEMPORARILY OF TREMENDOUS STRENGTH! YOU TRY IT!
IT'S AS THO I WERE ON THE THRESHOLD OF A FEARSOME DISCOVERY
AS CLARK REVIVES
SPEAK TO ME MAN ARE YOU ALL RIGHT
A TRIFLE DIZZY BUT IT WILL PASS
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THE METAL IMPARTED TO ME A SENSATION OF AMAZING WELL BEING YET WHEN YOU TOUCHED IT IT SEEMED TO ROB YOU OF ALL ANIMATION! INTERESTING AND PUZZLING!
I KNOW THE ANSWER ONLY TOO WELL!
I MYSELF MUST COME FROM KRYPTON. THE INTERSTELLAR FRAGMENT SWINGING CLOSE TO EARTH RENDERS MY BODILY STRENGTH HARDLY MORE THAN AVERAGE. WE'RE LIKE TWO POLES OF A SHORT-CIRCUITED BATTERY
WHILE I LIVED ON KRYPTON I DERIVED GREAT STRENGTH AND POWERS FROM THE PLANET BUT AFTER THE EXPLOSION AND MY REMOVAL TO EARTH CONTACT WAS BROKEN IN SOME MYSTERIOUS FASHION. WHEN THE FRAGMENT NEARS EARTH, THE EFFECT UPON ME IS NEGATIVE!
WEAKLY SCARCELY COMPREHENDING THE AMAZING SIGHT THEY WITNESS THE DAZED PRISONERS OF THE SEALED MINE LOOKED ON IN ASTONISHMENT AS
CLARK KENT RIPS OFF HIS OUTER GARMENTS
AND STANDS REVEALED BEFORE THEM IN HIS COLORFUL SUPERMAN COSTUME!
WHAT
THEY'RE SO DAZED THEY CAN HARDLY BELIEVE THEIR SENSES!
CLARK KENT... SUPERMAN... I MUST BE IMAGINING THINGS THAT'S IT! THE LACK OF AIR AFFECTING MY MIND
NO LOIS IT'S REAL ENOUGH ONLY TOO REAL
FORWARD STREAKS SUPERMAN AND ATTACKS THE STONE BARRIER WITH HIS BARE HANDS TEARING FLINGING THE ROCKS ASIDE
UNTIL HE TEARS A LARGE GAP OPEN. FRESH AIR SWEEPS IN!
THERE YOU ARE! BREATHE DEEPLY
AIR! AIR!
LIFTING LOIS SUPERMAN SPRINTS OUT WITH HER INTO THE OPEN
FOR ONCE THEY'VE FORGOTTEN THEIR PRECIOUS GOLD!
STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT YOU CLARK KENT SUPERMAN!
NO SOONER DO I GIVE THEM LIFE WHEN THEY'RE BACK TO THEIR OLD TRICKS!
SHOOT THEM DOWN!
AS ONE OF THE GREAT BOULDERS IN THE LEAD BOUNDS TOWARD THEM SUPERMAN ATTEMPTS AN UPWARD LEAP
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN YOU DOUBT YOUR OWN ABILITY!
KEEP HOPING!
TWISTING UNEXPECTEDLY THE BOULDER STRIKES SUPERMAN'S FOOT
OOPS! WE'RE FALLING DOWN!
DOWN THEY PLUMMET BEFORE THE GREATER MASS OF THE LANDSLIDE
WE'RE DONE FOR
HOLD TIGHT
UP SOMERSAULTS SUPERMAN IN A FINAL SPLIT-SECOND ATTEMPT TO AVERT THEIR DESTRUCTION
UP UP
WE MADE IT! WE'RE SAFE! WE'RE SAFE!
NOT UNTIL WE TAKE CARE OF A SKUNK NAMED BRONSON!
KEEP BACK! KEEP AWAY I WARN YOU OR I'LL
I THINK YOU'VE ALREADY CAUSED ALL THE HARM YOU'RE EVER GOING TO!

Four pages from an unpublished Superman story, circa 1939


No. 1
JUNE, 1938
ACTION COMICS
10¢

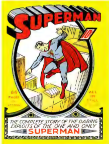
Copyright © 1938 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

On a sweltering summer night in 1933, Jerry Siegel lay in bed counting the cracks in the ceiling of his Cleveland, Ohio bedroom. The air was still and heavy. Clouds drifted past the moon. Up there was wind. If only I could fly. If only...and SUPERMAN was conceived, not in his entirely, but little by little throughout a long and sleepless night

Siegel tells it this way, *"I hop right out of bed and write this down, and then I go back and think some more for about two hours and get up again and write that down. This goes on all night at two-hour intervals, until in the morning I have a complete script."*

Without stopping for breakfast, he raced through the deserted dawn to awaken his friend Joe Shuster, 12 blocks away. Breathlessly, he explained the nature of his creation. Shuster was ecstatic. Without wasting a moment, they began developing the character in comic strip form. Both were 17 years old.

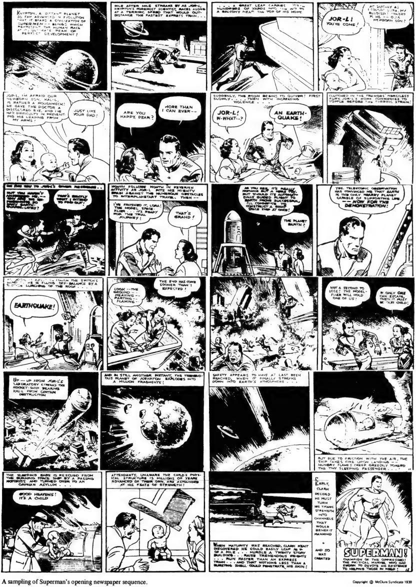
Initially, Superman was a variation of pulp heavyweight Doc Savage. The concept, and even the name Superman, could easily have been inspired by a Street & Smith advertisement that ran in the early 30's pulps. Comparison between Shuster's original Superman drawing and Doc's promotional ads bears marked similarities.


SUPERMAN
10¢
64 PAGES
ALL IN FULL COLOR
THE COMPLETE STORY OF THE DARING EXPLOITS OF THE ONE AND ONLY SUPERMAN

Copyright © 1939 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

THE SUPER STAR

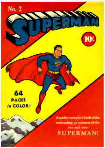
Shuster's first drawing of the original Superman concept.


KRYPTON, A DISTANT PLANET SO FAR ADVANCED IN EVOLUTION THAT IT BEARS A CIVILIZATION OF SUPERMEN -- BEINGS WHICH REPRESENT THE HUMAN RACE AT ITS ULTIMATE PEAK OF PERFECT DEVELOPMENT!
MILE AFTER MILE STREAKS BY AS JOR-L, KRYPTON'S FOREMOST SCIENTIST, RACES ALONG AT A TERRIFIC SPEED THAT WOULD OUT-DISTANCE THE FASTEST EXPRESS TRAIN . . .
. . . A GREAT LEAP CARRIES JOR-L HUNDREDS OF YARDS INTO THE AIR TO A BALCONY NEAR THE TOP OF HIS HOME
JOR-L! YOU'VE COME!
AS QUICKLY AS I COULD! LORA, MY BELOVED! WHERE IS HE -- OUR NEWBORN SON?
JOR-L, I'M AFRAID OUR NEWBORN SON, KAL-L, IS RATHER A ROUGHNECK! HE GAVE THE DOCTOR A DISCOLORED EYE, AND I'VE HAD DIFFICULTY IN PREVENTING HIS LEAPING FROM MY ARMS!
JUST LIKE YOUR DAD!
ARE YOU HAPPY, DEAR?
MORE THAN I CAN EVER --
SUDDENLY, THE ROOM BEGINS TO QUIVER! FIRST SLOWLY . . . THEN WITH INCREASING VIOLENCE . . .
JOR-L! W-WHAT--?
AN EARTHQUAKE!
CLUTCHED IN THE TREMORS' MERCILESS FURY, JOR-L'S HOME COMMENCES TO TOPPLE BEFORE THE TERRIFIC STRAIN!
ON THE WAY TO JOR-L'S OTHER RESIDENCE . .
BUT YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED ME, -- WHY ARE WE EXPERIENCING SO MANY EARTH-QUAKES LATELY?
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT!
MONTH FOLLOWS MONTH IN FEVERISH ACTIVITY AS JOR-L PITS HIS MIGHTY BRAIN AGAINST THE NUMEROUS OBSTACLES TO INTERPLANETARY TRAVEL. THEN --
I'VE FINISHED IT, LORA! THE MODEL SPACE-FLIER . . . IT'S READY FOR THE TRIAL JOURNEY!
THAT'S GRAND!
AS YOU SEE, IT'S REALLY NOTHING BUT A MERE TOY. BUT SHOULD ITS AUTOMATICALLY GUIDED FLIGHT TO EARTH PROVE SUCCESSFUL, I'LL COMMENCE TO CONSTRUCT A GIANT SPACE SHIP AT ONCE!
THE PLANET EARTH?
YES. TELESCOPIC OBSERVATION HAS CONVINCED ME THAT EARTH IS THE ONLY NEARBY PLANET CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE. -- NOW FOR THE DEMONSTRATION!
AS JOR-L IS ABOUT TO TOUCH THE SWITCH'S HANDLE, HE IS FLUNG OFF-BALANCE BY A SUDDEN LURCHING OF THE ROOF . . . .
EARTHQUAKE!
LOOK -- THE GROUND -- HEAVING -- PARTING -- FLAMING --
THE END HAS COME SOONER THAN I EXPECTED!
NOT A SECOND TO LOSE! THE MODEL-FLIER WILL HOLD ONE OF US!
IF ONLY ONE CAN ESCAPE, THEN IT MUST BE OUR CHILD!
UP -- UP FROM JOR-L'S LABORATORY STREAKS THE ROCKET-SHIP BEARING KAL-L FROM CERTAIN DESTRUCTION
AND IN STILL ANOTHER INSTANT, THE TREMENDOUS PLANET OF KRYPTON EXPLODES INTO A MILLION FRAGMENTS!
SAFETY APPEARS TO HAVE AT LAST BEEN REACHED, WHEN IT FINALLY STREAKS DOWN INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE . . .
BUT DUE TO FRICTION WITH THE AIR, THE SHIP TAKES FIRE UPON LANDING -- HUNGRY FLAMES CREEP GREEDILY TOWARD THE TINY SLEEPING PASSENGER . . . !
THE SLEEPING BABE IS RESCUED FROM THE BURNING SPACE SHIP BY A PASSING MOTORIST AND TURNED OVER TO AN ORPHAN ASYLUM . . .
GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S A CHILD
ATTENDANTS, UNAWARE THE CHILD'S PHYSICAL STRUCTURE IS MILLIONS OF YEARS ADVANCED OF THEIR OWN, ARE ASTOUNDED AT HIS FEATS OF STRENGTH!
WHEN MATURITY WAS REACHED, CLARK KENT DISCOVERED HE COULD EASILY LEAP 1/8 th OF A MILE . . . HURDLE A TWENTY STORY BUILDING . . . RAISE TREMENDOUS WEIGHTS . . . RUN FASTER THAN AN EXPRESS TRAIN . . . AND THAT NOTHING LESS THAN A BURSTING SHELL COULD PENETRATE HIS SKIN!
EARLY, CLARK DECIDED HE MUST TURN HIS TITANIC STRENGTH INTO CHANNELS THAT WOULD BENEFIT MANKIND
AND SO WAS CREATED
SUPERMAN!
CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED! THE PHYSICAL MARVEL WHO HAD SWORN TO DEVOTE HIS EXISTENCE TO HELPING THOSE IN NEED!

A sampling of Superman's opening newspaper sequence.

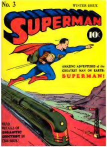
Copyright © McClure Syndicate 1939

Siegel's Superman concept embodied and amalgamated three separate and distinct themes: the visitor from another planet, the superhuman being and the dual identity. He composed the Superman charisma by exploiting all three elements, and all three contributed equally to the eventual success of the strip. His inspiration, of course, came from the science fiction pulps.


No. 2
SUPERMAN
10¢
64 PAGES in COLOR!
Another complete book of the astounding adventures of the one and only SUPERMAN!

Copyright © 1939 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

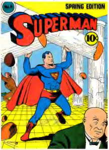
The idea of a visitor from a world other than our own probably took its fictional bows in Voltaire's 1752 tale *Micromegas.* Since then, countless authors have employed the idea including Jules Verne in *War Of The Worlds.* More probably the thought came from John W. Campbell's AARN MUNRO stories about a descendant of earthmen raised on the planet Jupiter who, because of the planet's dense gravity, is a mental and physical superman on earth. Siegel used this man from another planet speculation to explain the reason for his protagonist's extraordinary physical development. The idea of Jor-El saving his only child by propelling him off the planet in a tiny rocket had it's biblical counterpart in the parable of Moses and his concealment from the Pharaoh. The doomed planet Krypton exploding at the point of escape was a perfect dramatic touch that lent an epic quality as the first episode unfolded.


No. 3
WINTER ISSUE
SUPERMAN
10¢
AMAZING ADVENTURES of the GREATEST MAN ON EARTH: SUPERMAN!
READ DETAILS OF GIGANTIC CONTEST IN THIS ISSUE!

Copyright © 1939 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

The source for the essence of Superman and his development was influenced by Philip Wylie's striking novel *Gladiator.* Published in 1930, it served as a blueprint for Siegel's character. The opening page of *Action* 1 made an analogy between man and insects like grasshoppers and ants. Wylie had told it like this, *" 'Why not?' he said. 'Look at the insects–the ants. Strength a hundred times our own. An ant can carry a large spider–yet an ant is tissue and fiber, like a man. If a man could be given the same sinews–he could walk off with his own house. Consider the grasshoppers. Make a man as strong as a grasshopper–and he'll be able to leap over a church. I tell you, there is something that determines the quality of every muscle and nerve. Find it–transplant it–and you have the solution."*

Wylie's hero, Hugo Danner, performed feats of super strength as a baby as did the youthful Clark Kent. Danner discovered the extent of his power when he was 10. *"An easy exhilaration filled his veins. His pace increased. 'I wonder,' he thought, 'how fast I can run, how far I can jump.' He quickened his stride. In a moment he found that the turns in the trail were too frequent for him to see his course. He ran ahead, realizing that he was moving at an abnormal pace. Then he turned, gathered himself, and jumped carefully. He was astonished when he vaulted above the green covering of the trail. He came down heavily. He stood in his tracks, tingling.*



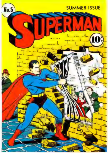
Copyright © 1939 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

" 'Nobody can do that, not even an acrobat,' he whispered. Again he tried, jumping straight up. He rose fully forty feet in the air.

" 'Good Jesus!' he exulted. In those lonely, incredible moments Hugo found himself. There in the forest, beyond the eye of man, he learned that he was superhuman. It was a rapturous discovery. He knew at that hour that his strength was not a curse. He had inklings of his invulnerability."

Danner's scientist father had injected his pregnant mother with a hypodermic full of "alkaline radicals" to produce his "super-child". During the war, Danner put his power to use. *"He felt a sharp sting above his collar bone. He looked there. A row of little holes had appeared in his shirt.*

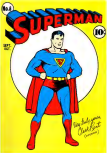
" 'Good God,' he whispered, 'a machine gun.'



Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

"But there was no blood. He sat down. He presumed, as a casualty, he was justified in sitting down. He opened his shirt by ripping it down. On his dark-tanned skin there were four red marks. The bullets had not penetrated him. Too tough! He stared numbly at the walking men. They had passed him. The magnitude of his realization held him fixed for a full minute. He was invulnerable!"

And later, *"He ran into the bubbling, doom-ridden chaos, waving his arms and shouting maniacal profanities. A dozen times he was knocked down. He bled slowly where fragments had battered him. He crossed over and paused on the German parapet. He was like a being of steel. Bullets sprayed him. His arms dangled and lifted. Barbed wire trailed behind him.*



Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

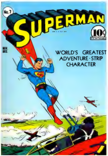
"Down before him, shoulder to shoulder the attacking regiments waited for the last crescendo of the bombardment. They saw him come out of the fury and smiled grimly. They knew such madness. They shot. He came on."

Danner pondered the use of his incredible powers. *"What would you do if you were the strongest man in the world, the strongest thing in the world, mightier than the machine? He made himself guess answers for the rhetorical query. 'I would – I would have won the war. But I did not. I would run the universe single-handed. Literally single-handed. I would scorn the universe and turn it to my own ends. I would be a criminal. I would rip open banks and gut them. I would kill and destroy. I would be a secret, invisible blight. I would set out to stamp crime off the earth; I would be a super-detective, following and summarily punishing every criminal until no one dared to commit a felony. What would I do? What will I do?"*

He remembered what his father had told him. *"You're not an ordinary human being. When people find that out, they'll – they'll–'*

" 'They'll hate me?'

" 'Because they fear you. So you see, you've got to be good and kind and considerate–to justify all that strength. Some day you'll find a use for it–a big, noble use–and then you can make it work and be proud of it. Until that day, you have to be humble like all the rest of us. You mustn't show off or do cheap tricks. Then you'd just be a clown. Wait your time, son, and you'll be glad of it.' "

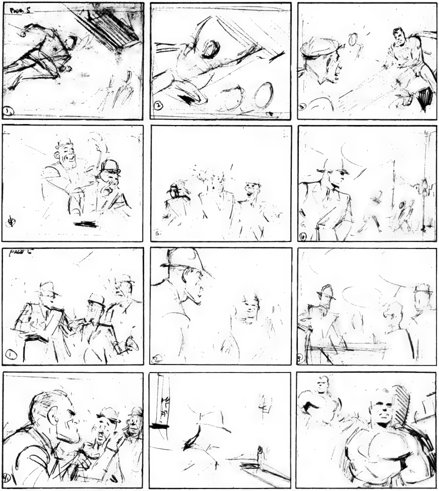


Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

Wylie's story was one of Siegel's favorites; he even reviewed it in his S-F fanzine. Siegel neatly rounded out Superman's powers with a touch of x-ray vision.

The business of being a reporter and having an alter ego had been done dozens of times before. The only difference was that Superman was playing the role of Kent. Siegel's mythical blending of the three themes was inspirational.

The early Superman wore street clothes, instead of a costume. The flowing cape and garish Red S insignia would come later. The Superman/Kent duality was also not in evidence in the beginning. Siegel described him as *"a character like Samson, Hercules and all*

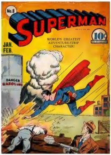


A panel-by-panel breakdown of two pages in an early Superman story by Joe Shuster. Note Shuster's repetitive figure positioning and his humorous approach to characterization. The layout gives ample opportunity to study Shuster's solid drawing technique.

the strong men I ever heard tell of rolled into one."

Superman was to go through an ontogeny of change taking years, finally to emerge as the Man of Steel in the first issue of *Action Comics* June 1938. Siegel and Shuster had, over the years, sent versions of their character to every comic syndicate editor in the country.

The Bell syndicate rejected them with, *"We are in the market only for strips likely to have the most extraordinary appeal, and we do not feel Superman gets into that category."* United Features told them Superman was *"a rather immature piece of work."* Esquire Features, Inc., suggested, *"Pay a little attention to actual drawing...Yours seems crude and hurried."*



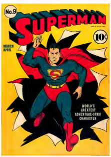
Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub Inc

The hottest property in the world spent six years yellowing on the shelf.

And it may have remained there except for Harry Donenfeld. Recently, Donenfeld had taken over the interests of Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and was attempting to assemble enough material for a new book. Donenfeld contacted M. C. Gaines, the original comic pioneer, who was an agent at the McClure Syndicate. By a fortuitous coincidence Gaines just happened to have the Superman strip on his desk. Instead of rejecting it as unsuitable for the newspapers, he sent it to Donenfeld who had it repasted in comic page form.

Seigel and shuster had forsaken hope their brainchild would ever be accepted for nationwide newspaper syndication. They had previously worked for Wheeler-Nicholson and Donenfeld drawing FEDERAL MEN, SLAM BRADLEY, SPY, RADIO SQUAD, DR. OCCULT and HENRI DUVAL. They responded to the opportunity of having Superman published by signing a standard release for the material and accepting a check for $130, which covered 98 panels on 13 pages. The book went to press.

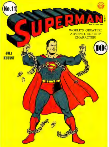
Signs of Superman's dawning popularity began with *Action's* fourth issue. Though sales were up, no one knew the reason. A newstand survey revealed the cause. Donenfeld ordered the red and blue figure plastered on every *Action* cover. They sold out. He gave Superman his own book, reprinting one early story. It, too, sold out.



Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc

The rest is history. With infallible visionary skill and business acumen, Donenfeld, with the help of business manager Jack Liebowitz, parlayed the property into the most popular and powerful folk hero in American fiction. Superman was featured in 230 daily and Sunday papers, a series of animated and live films, and an endless profusion of novelties, toys, puzzles, and games.

He received his own quarterly book in the summer of 1939 and began appearing in *World's Finest* (originally *New York World's Fair)* a 15 cent book featuring 96 pages between cardboard covers, with the first issue in the spring of 1941. Cover blurbs modestly proclaimed him "The World's Greatest Adventure Strip Character."

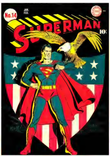


Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub.Inc

Superman's origin must be as familiar to every American boy as Washington's stand at Valley Forge. *"Just before the doomed planet Krypton exploded to fragments, a scientist placed his infant son within an experimental rocket-ship, launching it toward Earth!"* Found and adopted *"by an elderly couple, the Kents,"* the lad *"learned to his delight that he could hurdle skyscrapers...leap an eighth of a mile...raise tremendous weights...run faster than a streamline train...and nothing less than a bursting shell could penetrate his skin!*

"The passing away of his foster parents greatly grieved Clark Kent. But it strengthened a determination that had been growing in his mind. Clark decided he must turn his titantic strength into channels that would benefit mankind. And so was created...SUPERMAN, champion of the oppressed, the physical marvel who had sworn to devote his existence to helping those in need!" It read like a grade school reader which is exactly what is was–the comic book primer, the text from which all others would learn to read and write the language of super heroes.

Superman was a bold, bright figure displaying the three primary colors, red, yellow and blue, with poetic legitimacy. Not only would every costumed hero to follow be patterned after the Man of Steel's powers, but his costume would, of necessity, be some blend or synthesis of Superman's own.



Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub Inc

Every other hero to follow acquired his or her title in some devious way. Not Superman. He was nobility among super heroes. He was born a monarch. He never even found it necessary to wear a mask like the rest, another factor for his success.

Superman's creators came from similar backgrounds. Siegel's parents ran a men's furnishing store, barely making a living for their six children. The Shusters had it even tougher. Joe's father was a tailor and had four besides himself to feed. Joe worked at odd jobs. He learned to draw after winning a scholarship at the Cleveland School of Art and later at the John Huntington Art School where he paid for lessons a dime at a time.

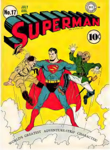
Siegel and Shuster met in school and began collaborating in *Science Fiction*, a small mimeo fanzine. Siegel submitted stories to leading S-F pulps under the pseudonym of Bernard J. Kenton. Both boys were heavily influenced by the pulps. They *"inspired me to devote myself henceforth to writing science fiction literature,*"Siegel confessed.

After Superman, Siegel and Shuster rented a $30-a-month office in Cleveland, hired a staff of four artists (including Joe's brother) and began producing a weekly output of 13 comic pages, 6 dailies and a Sunday newspaper page. *The Saturday Evening Post* reported their gross earnings in 1940 at $75,000.

Shuster furnished his house and bought a car. Siegel married his childhood sweetheart. Neither, it seems, considered an investment for the future which at that time looked unusually prosperous.

Shuster was arrested once while vacationing in Miami Beach. Loitering aimlessly amidst bathers and big cars, he drew attention from a policeman because of his undistinguished appearance and shabby clothes. Joe made the mistake of flashing a roll of large bills and insisting he had created Superman. Taken to magistrate's court on a vagrancy charge, a sharp reporter jokingly suggested Shuster prove his identity by drawing Superman. To their embarrassment he did just that. Sheepishly the court withdrew charges.

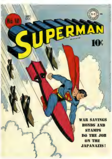
The secret of Superman's existance, of course, lies deep within the psyche of his creators. Described as "two small, shy, nervous, myopic lads," Siegel and Shuster made the Man of Steel everything they weren't: massive, confident, strong, handsome; a being with perfect reflexes and super vision. They were, in their own way, striking back at a world of bullies that had threatened, bruised and beaten them. No small measure of Superman's success can be attributed to their explicit tenacity for acting out their juvenile fantasies of swift justice against their persecutors.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

From Plato's Republic to Opar to Kane's Xanadu, at every level, the human imagination has attempted to fashion something better for itself than the existing society, to establish a personal primacy in a world in which reality diminishes the individual. Nietzsche said man is only a rope over an abyss, a rope between animal and Superman. The strip's appeal seemed to prove that out.

Siegel and Shuster created the dream world of Metropolis (named for Lang's sci-fi masterpiece) where they alone guided the fates of their characters. The Superman fantasy stimulated a host of intellectuals to write interpretations analyzing in terms of Nietzschean and Freudian philosophy what any child could have told them. The truth was that Siegel and Shuster's imaginary world tended to be more Adlerian than Freudian: the drive wasn't for sex but for power, for the ability to dominate their environment through sheer brute strength.


No. 18
SEPT. OCT.
SUPERMAN
10¢
WAR SAVINGS BONDS AND STAMPS DO THE JOB ON THE JAPANAZIS!

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

Whatever it may be, Superman's appeal was one of intrinsic simplicity. Kids understood it better than anyone. His outfit was more colorful, more flamboyant than the Phantom's. His method of operation more direct than Dick Tracy. And he was stronger than Tarzan, Buck Rogers and everyone else put together. He lacked the adult, sophisticated veneer of Flash Gordon, the talkativeness of Terry. In short, he was the graphic representation of the ultimate childhood dream-self.

Superman's own position may be slightly more complex.

He was, of course, an alien.

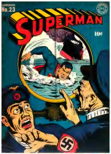
Yet, he was an alien that grew up in a human society, adopting their values and moralities, their strengths and weaknesses for his own. As a child he was aware of the peculiar differences between himself and others, and he developed from adolescence to adulthood behind a self-imposed psychological barrier. The Kents had raised him as a human being, not as a superman. For all his super-strength, he lacked the super emotional stability that should have accompanied it.

In a way, Superman was hung-up with a psychological handicap. He transcended it in the only way available. He became Clark Kent. He could have been king, emperor of the whole world or even leave it if he chose. But as Kent he looked and acted human, complete with human imperfections like eyeglasses. Eventually, he became more human than alien.

For a superman who was able to be whatever he wanted, he chose to be Kent, to be accepted as Kent. He became bored with the perfection of Superman, preferring instead the flaws of Kent. He knew that perfection is dull and insipid, that it is the flaws, the accidents, that are interesting, often exciting.

Superman could have been Superman all the time, giving us more pages of solid muscle in each story if he chose to do so. Why the 9 to 5 job? Why the silly hat, glasses, suit and tie that stifled not only bravery but brains? Why put up with Perry White's bagdering? Why tolerate Lois Lane's snide remarks? Either Superman was a masochist or there was more here than meets the eye.

Remote speculation? Not at all. His creators were ordinary people. Siegel, in fact, had difficulty getting through school. Whether by accident or intent, his creators tempered their vision of the super-being by endowing him with a common, all-too-human personality.

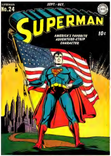


Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

The contrast lifted the strip from the ordinary (after all, Mandrake could produce super-illusions and Buck Rogers could fly) to the remarkable.

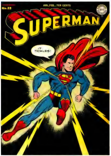
Behind his morality play simplicity and big top displays of brawn was an inner core of truth that was Superman's real strength. Atlas and Hercules performed super-human feats. Why weren't they comic book headliners? Because they lacked a weakness with which we could identify. Clark Kent existed so that we might lock into that part of him in our own fantasies, hoping somehow that a superman lived inside us until the right moment came for him to emerge. Superman, in turn, used Kent to identify with us.

The Kent/Lois Lane/Superman romantic triangle was another matter. It prevailed as a story device, springboarding the characters into amusing situations like a running gag and also serving as a focal point for the strip's only characterization. Lois was too school-girlishly romantic to see beyond Kent's blue suit, red tie (both he and The Spirit must have frequented the same habadashery) and spectacles. She looked at him with adament disdain, while we looked smugly at her. Superman's reaction was about equal to ours. Once he doffed his street clothes, he was unapproachable; what woman was good enough? Somewhere, there was a lesson to be learned.



Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

Surprisingly the early stories stressed plot more than artistic values. Though there was evidence of Foster's Tarzan in Shuster's work (including numerous action swipes), there was none of the explicit anatomical definition the character seemed to require. In fact, the art embodied the quality of an editorial cartoon style, placing somewhere between Calkins and Andriola. Blacks were gratuitous.



Copyright © 1944 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

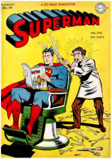
Nevertheless, the drawing was solid, persuasively charming and functional, embracing an unpretentious simplicity of style that WAS early comic books.

Shuster told Superman's tales with guileless innocence in eye-level medium and long shots to fully showcase his dramatic figure in action. Sophistication might have been anathematic.

Siegel's scripts ran from 8 to 24 pages in length and were generally little morality plays in which the Man of Steel played the decisive role. Superman found himself getting a reprieve for an innocent prisoner, restoring the faith of an ex-heavyweight fighter, championing the cause for ill-treated orphans, subduing the effects of natural disasters and, of course, saving Lois' skin. In the beginning they both worked as reporters for editor George Taylor's Daily Star.

Yet the comics can take credit for only half of Superman's popularity. Another media closed the gap.

"Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!" was first heard over the radio on February 12, 1940 and immediately developed into the most popular children's program ever broadcast. Bud Collyer, TV's Beat the Clock host, starred, using a tenor voice for Kent and a basso profundo for Superman. He'd switch timbre in mid-line: *"This looks like a job...FOR SUPERMAN!"* Studio effects men were puzzled by the problem of Superman in flight until they mixed the sound of a falling bomb, a fifty-mile-an-hour gale and a hand-operated wind machine. Once you heard it, you wouldn't forget it.



Copyright © 1946 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

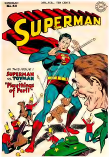
Bob Maxwell, the show's producer, created Jimmy Olsen out of dire necessity. Superman previously had no one with which to converse. Maxwell also added green Kryptonite. *"Up, up and away!"* became a household phrase (and in the 60's, a song).

From 1941 to 1943 Paramount released eighteen Superman cartoons, some of which dealt spectacularly with the winning of the war. Stirring scores, heavy rotoscoping and inspirational direction by Dave Fleischer placed them among the best animated films ever produced.

Superman never really had anything to flex his muscles over until the war. Natural disasters merely provided an arena in which the Man of Steel performed alone. His adversaries, in all genders, shapes and sizes, were as bland as a steady diet of mashed potatoes. He had come to save the world and was put to work breaking up fist fights.

To make matters worse he was becoming more powerful all the time. Instead of leaping through the sky, Superman flew under his own propulsion because the studio that produced his cartoons said he looked silly hopping through the city like an anthropomorphic kangaroo. Where once a bursting shell could supposedly have penetrated his skin, he was now invulnerable.

Superman developed X-Ray vision and in later years telescopic vision, microscopic vision, heat vision, cold vision and all possible combinations thereof. In fact, the only thing he couldn't do was see around the corner to the day when a proliferation of imitative offspring would turn his one-man show into a very crowded stage indeed.

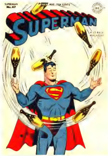


Copyright © 1946 National Periodical Pub Inc

World War II gave Superman a new lease on life. The cover of issue 12 (Sept. 1941) showed Superman walking arm and arm with a soldier and a sailor. From then on, he was over-turning battleships, tying up cannon barrels like pretzels and riding bombs down on nests of Jap-a-Nazi rats. Nonetheless, Hirohito admitted Superman was his favorite fictional character. On one cover two Germans are gaping in fear at their periscope viewer which shows a grim Superman swimming directly toward them. At last the Man of Steel could tangle with opponents of steel: battleships, U-boats, tanks and planes.

The strongest man in the world had, by definition, long since robbed himself of the possibility of believable conflict. Everyone knew from the start he was unbeatable. The war provided exercise but when that was over the gym closed.

The May 1945 issue of Superman cover-featured a plea for the Red Cross. It should have been a plea for Superman. His heroics were transformed into low comedy slapstick routines. Superman covers, once the stamping-ground of boundless action, began looking like vaudeville blackouts as Superman defrosted Lois' icebox, got a haircut with scissors breaking on every strand, performed as a one-man-band, blew the candles out on a birthday cake and (who can forget this classic of the action cover) yelping with pain as Lois dropped a biscuit on his foot. Readers were perplexed! Sad times, indeed.

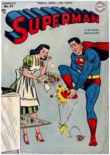


Copyright © 1947 National Periodical Pub Inc

What happened? The powers at National had decided the answer to revitalization lay in the element of contrast. Instead of, as expected, having Superman triumph over the second strongest man in the world, the new policy was to have him confounded by the weakest. From the monumental battles of the war, Superman fell to the seeming incongruities of fighting the Toyman, the Prankster and Mr. Mxyztplk.

The late 40's saw a bewildered Superman being jeered at by a mocking jack-in-the-box in the midst of a plethora of toys. It was a new approach. And it worked!

The man of tomorrow had become the fall guy of today. Which was understandable. After the war the nation needed a breather. Like the returning G.I.'s, Superman was absorbed into the daily routine of civilian life but emerged with a new dimension to his character...a sense of humor.

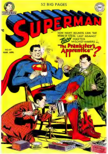


Copyright © 1948 National Periodical Pub Inc

The man responsible for the remodeling job was Mort Weisinger. Born in 1915, he began his career by writing S-F pulp fiction, later teaming with youngster Julius Schwartz to form a literary agency called the Solar Sales Service. They acted as agents representing a clientele of writers that included Lovecraft, Kuttner and Bloch. Next, Weisinger took a job with Leo Marguiles who published about 50 pulp titles under the Standard logo. As editor of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Startling Stories*, he conceived S-F hero CAPTAIN FUTURE, uncovered the talents of Alfred Bester and Ray Bradbury, and bought Arthur Clarke's first American story. At the helm of *G-Man* and *Phantom Detective*, Mort added top fiction writers Frank Gruber and Steve Fisher to his contributors.

Early in 1941 he was contacted by pulp writer Whitney Ellsworth, now editorial director at DC Comics, with an offer of a staff job editing Superman. Considering his science-fiction knowledge and facility for plotting, Weisinger accepted and got Bill Finger and Otto Binder to teach him the finer points of comic art. Mort then turned loose an army of super-types like THE VIGILANTE, TNT, AIRWAVE and GREEN ARROW in addition to editing others.

Then his draft notice arrived. He looked around for a replacement and decided the man for the job was his co-worker at Standard, Jack Schiff.

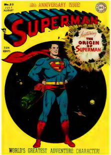

52 BIG PAGES
SUPERMAN
DC
10¢
SUPERMAN
HOW MANY ROUNDS CAN THE MAN OF STEEL LAST AGAINST TWO MASTER MISCHIEF-MAKERS IN
"The Prankster's Apprentice"?
NO. 69
MAR.–APR.

Copyright © 1951 National Periodical Pub Inc

Back from the service, Weisinger returned to his position at National and began shaping the Superman saga with innovations like the Phantom Zone, which imprisoned the criminals of Krypton before its annihilation; "imaginary" stories that developed "what if" concepts; and time travel. He recruited writers like Edmond Hamilton, Dave Vern, Horace Gold, Manly Wade Wellman, Alfred Bester and Otto Binder to hype Superman tales with imagination and verve. Binder endowed the strip with Supergirl, Bizarro, red Kryptonite and Brainiac.

Superman received an added boost at the turn of the decade from several celluloid reincarnations. Kirk Alyn portrayed the Man of Steel in two Columbia serials written by Weisinger — *Superman* (1948) and *Superman vs. The Atom Man* (1950). *Superman and The Mole Men* (1951) and a TV series spanning the 50's made George Reeves the actor most identified with the role.

As soon as the Superman trend began to take off in the 40's dozens of artists like Curt Swan, Jack Burnley, Al Plastino, Irwin Hasen and George Papp lent a pencil and brush to produce his many adventures, but the work of Wayne Boring emerges as the most notable of the "stable" artists. Boring salvaged the Man of Steel by transforming him into a massive, muscled version of virile exuberance. His expressive faces and tight, incisive rendering breathed new life into Superman's tired hulk. Cities became skyscrapered stylizations of vertical lines. Superman began to look the part. Boring's classic figure remains as the model for today's Superman.



Copyright © 1948 National Periodical Pub Inc

The passage of time, exceeding 30 years, has only confirmed Superman's position as the Odin-figure amidst a munificent mythology of comic titans. He has witnessed a genesis of supercopies born, grow, change, struggle, die and be welcomed into the sanctum sanctorum of superhero Valhalla. He has endured. And as long as he continues, his patriarchal presence will be felt. Weisinger says, ***"He's invulnerable, he's immortal; even bad scripts can't hurt him."***

One of comics most prolific writers, Otto Binder, left the comic field in 1940 after two years in the business. ***"I didn't think the comics would last."*** Perhaps they wouldn't have had not Superman been there. He performed the labors of Hercules for the faltering embryonic industry; a feat the history of comics has recorded as his greatest.

If he has weakened, we must remember that like the legendary Atlas, Superman bears the weight of the comic world upon his shoulders. If he has been momentarily eclipsed by the scintilla of stylistic trends, we must understand his position is one of stability, not of change. And if he has grown weary we must embrace him for the ten thousand and one battles he has fought, outselling all his imitators put together, for his is a timeless triumph and from his life stream all hero strips flow.

He is a superman among supermen. ■

THE PLAYBOY HERO

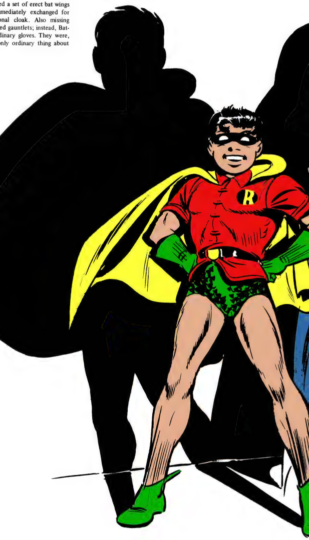
Hot on the heels of the Superman success came a second DC triumph. If there was any question about their position as number one, this new creation erased it forever. Soloing, each was impressive. Together, they were an irresistible package of dynamite. Back-to-back, they insured DC's popularity beyond the shadow of a doubt.

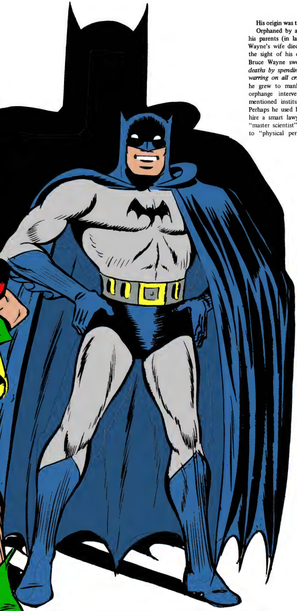
Crime beware! THE BATMAN had arrived!

He appeared full-blown without origin in *Detective Comics* (May 1939) shouldering aside strips like SLAM BRADLEY, COSMO, Phantom of Disguise, SPEED SAUNDERS and DR. FU MANCHU. Swinging across rooftops (God only knows where he had anchored his rope), he was more bat than man, his cape drawn to resemble a pair of huge wings. In one swoop the tone was set for the following year of adventures.

The Batman (as he was then called) confined his attention to monstrous crimes and criminals of a bizarre nature, although certainly none exceeded his own appearance superficially. Early Batman was essentially the same as today's with three notable exceptions.

His black cowl displayed a truly forbidding set of ears that shrank proportionately with each issue as Batman moved away from the mysterious and into the ordinary. The change was mourned, for the ears added an exquisite touch of the macabre that seemed just right for the character. In addition, Batman sported a set of erect bat wings that were immediately exchanged for the conventional cloak. Also missing were the finned gauntlets; instead, Batman wore ordinary gloves. They were, in fact, the only ordinary thing about him.





Unpublished Bob Kane drawing of the dynamic duo, inked by Robinson – vintage 1939

His origin was told in *Detective* 33.

Orphaned by a thug who shot both his parents (in later retellings Thomas Wayne's wife died of a heart attack at the sight of his death), a 10 year old Bruce Wayne swore, *"to avenge their deaths by spending the rest of my life warring on all criminals."* Presumably, he grew to manhood in solitude. No orphange intervened. No story ever mentioned institutionalized education. Perhaps he used his father's fortune to hire a smart lawyer. Having become a "master scientist" and trained his body to "physical perfection", Bruce sank back in his easy chair. Hand on chin he mused, *"Criminals are a superstitious, cowardly lot so my disguise must be able to strike terror into their hearts! I must be a creature of the night. Black, terrible...a...a..."* And so began the grand tradition of embarrassing moments in which heroes groped for names their authors had ready for months. *"As if in answer a huge bat flies in the open window!*

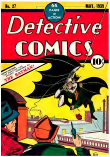
" 'A bat! That's it! It's an omen...I shall become a BAT!'

"And thus is born this weird figure of the dark...this avenger of evil, THE BATMAN."

Coincidentally, both Superman and Batman were orphans; both had civilian identities; both wore costumes. There the similarities ended. Batman was, in fact, the opposite of the man of steel, a man of flesh and blood.

Superman was a multi-colored one-man circus doing continuous performances at popular prices for the public. Batman was a dark, shadowy loner working outside the law, outside the public eye, ruthlessly stalking his prey through rain-slick alleyways.

Superman could punch his way out of anything; he didn't have to think. Batman had the only cerebral-oriented stories that didn't scrimp on the action.

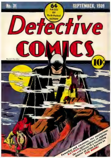


Copyright © 1939 National Periodicals

Batman's alter ego was far removed from Superman's humiliating Kent. Bruce Wayne was rich.

Superman never got hurt. He couldn't if he wanted to. Batman was constantly being injured. In one tale, a crook, suspicious of being followed, noticed the caped crusader's wet footprints leading to the trunk of his car. The thug emptied his revolver into it. It was sure to be a trick. It wasn't. Robin had to take over the case.

But the differences went far deeper. Thematically the strips were in opposition. Superman had sworn *"to devote his existence to helping those in need."* Batman's approach balanced the scales, *"I swear by the spirits of my parents to avenge their deaths by spending the rest of my life warring on all criminals."* Where Superman's motivation was one of altruistic benevolence, Batman's was based on misanthropic vengeance. One summed up the humane qualities that man could have, while the other reflected humanities relentlessly cold-blooded nature. Violence and evil turned in upon itself as Batman purged the comics' underworld of crime.


No. 31
SEPTEMBER, 1939
64 PAGES OF Thrill-Packed ACTION
Detective COMICS
10¢
Powerful and awesome, the mysterious BATMAN again appears to oppose the evil forces of a terrifying master of crime known as THE MONK!

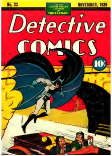
Copyright © 1939 National Periodicals

Superstition and the supernatural ran side-by-side. Heavily steeped in teutonic atmosphere, Batman conjured up visions of vampires with his black cloak, grim visage and white slit eyes. He moved through cubistic backgrounds of warped perspectives and paranoic tilt shots, of shadows and silhouettes that gave credence to the thought that he was indeed more bat than man. Dressed like a wealthy count by day, he would emerge Dracula-like at night for fantastic nocturnal forays amidst moonlit settings. It would be safe to say that vengeance turned Wayne into Batman.

Superman had given DC its strength, but Batman gave it tone. Of course Superman was more impressive, certainly more original, but Batman was more fascinating. You either liked one or the other, depending on the extent of your psychological development. An audience had been waiting for Superman. Batman had magnificently created his own.

The offspring of Bob Kane and Bill Finger, Batman represented a new school of comic heroes. He was a manifest extension of THE SHADOW, SPIDER and BLACK MASK DETECTIVE pulps. He was the next step in the progression that created *Detective Comics*... a super detective!

His creators had both attended De Witt Clinton High School in New York. Kane, after studying a mail-order art course, began his career with the Eisner and Iger Shop in 1938 producing PETER PUPP for *Jumbo Comics,* SIDE STREETS OF NEW YORK and VAN BRAGGER for *Circus Comics,* SPARK STEVENS in Wonder Comics, then comic fillers for DC like GINGER SNAP, GUMSHOE GUS, JEST A SECOND and PROFESSOR DOOLITTLE. *"I suppose that I must have printer's ink in my blood, for as far back as I can recall I've had a pencil in my hand and am sure that I must be the champion doodler of all times,"* Kane says.


No. 33
NOVEMBER, 1939
ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE OF THE BATMAN!
Detective COMICS
10¢

Copyright © 1939 National Periodicals

Finger was also a New Yorker, born February 8, 1914, a few years before Kane. In his teens he moved from Yorkville to the Bronx, a few blocks from Kane, whom he met at a party. A discussion of comics ensued.

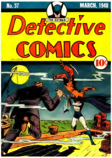
Bill, at that time a shoe salesman, was a voracious reader, a habit he had adopted after being bedridden with scarlet fever as a child. From Frank Merriwell to The Shadow to Dickens, he had read them all. *"I was a science-fiction bug, the old stories in Wonder and Amazing, Hugo Gernsback and 'Doc' Smith."* Kane was impressed with Finger's self-taught literacy and expressive turn of phrase. He asked Bill to meet him later at Edgar Allan Poe Park to discuss a new strip he was developing.

That strip, RUSTY AND HIS PALS, in *Adventure Comics* marked the initial collaboration between the pair. Rusty, Tubby and Specs adventured in tales of pirates and smugglers right out of Tom Sawyer. Kane's next venture was more ambitious. He began moving away from "goo-goo feet" art to a straight comic style that would be rooted in his last pre-Batman strip.

Editor Vince Sullivan had asked Kane for a new adventure series. Kane, in turn, called upon Finger who remembers, *"I've always liked Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines, so I thought we might have a great white hunter type character – one whose adventures would take him anywhere, Africa, South America, anywhere. I called him CLIP CARSON."*

Tall, dark-haired, handsome, Carson was a globe-trotting troubleshooter in the tradition of Allan Quatermain. He bore a striking resemblance to the artist, just as Bruce Wayne would later.

Bill worked up his ideas from a repository of pulp and movie plots that looked similar to his filmic favorite *Gunga Din*. His father had agreed to display movie posters in the window of his store so that Bill could get free passes for flicks like *The Clutching Hand* with Wallace Reed to Tom Mix's *Lone Star Ranger*.

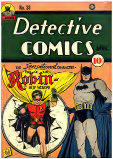


Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

Suddenly, Superman began to take off. ULTRA-MAN, SANDMAN, CRIMSON AVENGER, all sought equal recognition but lacked sufficient imagination to launch them into the big time. But the order was given, the logic simple. If enough new heroes could be created, one was sure to be a hit. Whitney Ellsworth called upon Kane for another union-suit character.

He immediately began working on a batch of sketches, employing various combinations of the super-hero formula as it existed then. Kane says, *"The Batman costume was designed to cloak Bruce Wayne's true identity. I recall seeing a movie around 1926 called 'The Bat,' in which the villian wore a bat-like costume which was quite awesome. The main difference being that I changed my character into a hero. I felt that this awesome costume on my hero would throw fear and respect into all the villains that he would encounter in his many exciting adventures."*

Finger remembers Kane phoning to say that *"he had an idea for a character called Batman, and he'd like me to see the drawings. I went over to Kane's, and he had drawn a character who looked very much like Superman with kind of...reddish tights, I believe, with boots... no gloves, no gauntlets...with a small domino mask, swinging on a rope. ..he had two stiff wings sticking out, looking like bat wings. And under it was a big sign...Batman."*


No. 38
Detective COMICS
10¢
THE Sensational CHARACTER FIND OF 1940 ... Robin - THE BOY WONDER

Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

Together, they developed the embryonic Batman. *"I got Webster's Dictionary down off the shelf and was hoping they would have a drawing of a bat, and sure enough they did. I said, 'notice the ears, why don't we duplicate the ears?' I suggested he draw what looked like a cowl. He experimented with various cowls. I suggested he bring the cowl nosepiece down and make him mysterious and not show any eyes at all. I was very much influenced by The Shadow and Doc Savage, The Phantom, things of that sort."*

Further alterations changed the Batman's colors to the blue-black and grey outfit of today. *"I didn't like the wings, so I suggested he make a cape and scallop the edges so it would flow out behind him when he ran and would look like bat wings. He didn't have any gloves on. We gave him gloves because naturally he'd leave fingerprints. They weren't the gauntlet type; that came later on. We discussed Batman's potential. My idea was to have Batman be a combination of Douglas Fairbanks, Sherlock Holmes, The Shadow and Doc Savage as well."*

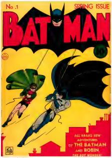
Kane's work on Clip Carson had educated his artistic sensibilities just enough to allow him to tackle the Batman concept, at best a difficult subject. Compared with strips like Mandrake and Flash Gordon, Kane's art was primitive, yet, engagingly so. Structural deficiencies were outstanding; anatomy was stiff, unrealistic; the rendering weak. Still, the inadvertent betrayal of realism seemed to add rather than detract from the grim romanticism of the Batman formula.

"My early idols in the comics field were Dick Tracy, Barney Google and Flash Gordon," Kane admits candidly. He used Foster and Raymond for draw-

ing reference and sequences from Caniff's TERRY but, most of all, was influenced by Chester Gould's TRACY, the style particularly evident in the Batman villains. Kane displayed a remarkable sensitivity to the visual form.

Everyone had huge square chins and squinty eyes. Petty crooks wore caps. Racketeers had wide-brimmed hats. Victims-to-be wore garish, ill-fitting suits. Rich ones wore smoking jackets. And the villains invariably knew the best tailors. Kane created an underworld of stripe-suited pimps and shoulder-padded hoods with greasy hair. His Caligariesque landscapes delineated a world of large moons and long shadows, weird perspectives and weirder people. Batman flitted silently across a noctural chiaroscuro with the aid of grappling hook and rope.

The cowled crimefighted premiered in *Detective* 27 in a 6 page tale called *The Case of the Chemical Syndicate* formally signed Robert Kane. Commissioner Gordon appeared in the first panel. Finger amply applied his pulp educated sense of melodrama. *"My first script was a take-off on a Shadow story. But I didn't want Batman to be a superman; I wanted Batman to be hurt. Everything he did was based on athletics, on using his astute wits and acute observation.*


No .1
SPRING ISSUE
BATMAN
10¢
ALL BRAND NEW ADVENTURES OF THE BATMAN AND ROBIN THE BOY WONDER!

Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

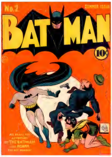
"Bruce Wayne's first name came from Robert Bruce, the Scottish patriot. Wayne, being a playboy, was a man of gentry. I searched for a name that would suggest colonialism. I tried Adams, Hancock...then, I thought of Mad Anthony Wayne.

"Originally I was going to call Gotham City, Civic City. Then I tried Capital City, then Coast City. Then, I flipped through the phone book and spotted the name Gotham Jewelers and said 'that's it,' Gotham City. We didn't call it New York because we wanted anybody in any city to identify with it. Of course, Gotham is another name for New York.

"I patterned my style of writing Batman after the Shadow. Also after the old Warner Bros. movies, the gangster movies with Jimmy Cagney, George Raft, Bogart. I always liked that kind of dramatic point of view. It was completely pulp style. Sometimes I overdid it, writing phrases like 'Night mantles the City'. But, somehow, it all seemed to work."

Simultaneous to Batman's birth another hero of the same costume, creed and calling appeared on the scene (July 1939) in *Black Book Detective*, a leading crime pulp of the era. THE BLACK BAT starred in over 50 novels written by G. Wayman Jones.

The Black Bat's gear was uncannily like that of the Batman's, including the cape and cowl. DC was shook up.


No.2
SUMMER ISSUE
BATMAN
10¢
ALL BRAND NEW ADVENTURES OF THE BATMAN AND ROBIN THE BOY WONDER!

Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

"There was a lawsuit almost pending," Finger reminisces. *"It was a weird coincidence. Apparently this character had already been written and on the drawing board. Whit Ellsworth used to be a pulp writer for Better Publications. So through Ellsworth's intervention a lawsuit was averted. They were ready to sue us and we were ready to sue them. It was just one of those wild coincidences."*

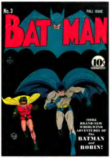
Another coincidence was the fact that the Black Bat wore gauntlets with fins, a costume device Batman wouldn't develop until *Detective* 36, about a year after his inception.

Batman appeared on alternate covers until issue 35. After that he officially began his reign as DC's nocturnal nemesis of crime. In issue 28 he began the habit of leaving his calling card attached to his defeated adversary in the style of Mary Roberts Rinehart's *THE BAT*. By issue 29 his utility belt became functional by holding gas pellets. Utility belts had, of course, long since been common among pulp heroes like Doc Savage and Captain Hazzard. This issue and the next landmarked Batman's first "name" villain, DR. DEATH, again inspired by a pulp feature of the same name. *"The villains were patterned after those in The Pulps, kind of bizarre and wild,"* Finger confesses.

Then, unexpectedly, Ellsworth took Finger off Batman and asked a full-fledged lawyer just out of college to script the new character. Gardner Fox wrote the next few stories with a completely new approach. He introduced a love interest for Wayne in the person of Julie Madison, who was immediately placed under the hypnotic control of the diabolic Monk. Batman followed her to Europe in this 10 page tale and made his first withdrawals, the Batarang and Batgyro, from his inexhaustible account of personal paraphernalia.

In the story, as he was being lowered into a pit of poisonous snakes, he struck the descent lever with his Batarang which he then used to smash an overhead chandelier and cut his way free with the broken glass. The improbability of a chandelier over a snake pit hardly detracted from the ingenuity of the first of Batman's escapes from "inescapable" traps - his specialty.

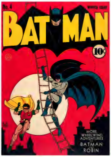
The follow-up, right out of early Bram Stoker, thrust Batman into a nightmare of ancient castles, vampires, werewolves and the supernatural. Again attempting to save the girl, the caped crimebuster finds himself in an arena of ravenous wolves. With gas pellets, Batarang and silken rope, he escapes to track down the murderous Monk in his tomb. Then, in a scene like the finale of Dracula, Batman opens the coffin to reveal the living corpse. *"Never again will you harm any mortal being,"* swears the Batman as he empties a gun into the Monk's inert body. He had taken the precaution of melting down a silver statue into bullets.


No.3
FALL ISSUE
BATMAN
10¢
MORE BRAND-NEW WHIRLWIND ADVENTURES OF The BATMAN and ROBIN!

Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

The bizarre approach was too remote for the tastes of the time, though in retrospect it remains as a memorably unique moment in Batman's chronology. The next stories were more down to earth. Batman wore a pistol Phantom-fashion on the cover of 31 and inside, made use of an automobile that would eventually become the sleek Batmobile. A two page origin, later used in *Batman* 1, appeared in *Detective* 33. Batman baddie Hugo Strange debuted two issues later.

During this period Finger was paid for his work by Kane and not until a half-dozen or so issues of Batman were finished did he begin to work officially for DC. Shortly afterward, Mort Weisinger joined the DC staff as Batman's first editor. Until this time Finger had simply written stories off the top of his head; now he had editorial direction. After the success of Batman his script rate was about $12 a page. Kane benefitted financially by periodical bonus checks from DC's ever-expanding purse.


No. 4
WINTER ISSUE
BATMAN
10¢
MORE WHIRLWIND ADVENTURES OF BATMAN AND ROBIN

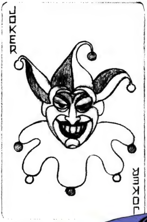
Copyright © 1940 National Periodicals

At the same time, Kane recruited the services of his assistant, Jerry Robinson. He had accosted Robinson, who was selling ice cream after school, to inquire who had decorated the jacket Jerry was wearing. Kane was impressed by the art work and told him about the Batman strip, suggesting he might be interested in assisting with the book. Robinson began in September 1939. He was 17.

Robinson, intending to pursue the profession of journalism at Columbia, was soon caught up in his enthusiasm and the popularity of Batman. He worked with Kane, first lettering, then pencilling backgrounds and finally inking. Robinson developed rapidly, often working on Batman 15 hours a day. His capacity expanded proportionately with his capabilities, and he soon proceeded to turn out complete stories, the first of which was *Brothers in Crime* in *Batman* 5.

Robinson applied an acute sense of design to the cowled avenger. He was responsible for giving Batman an additional boost with the thrust of his crisp, polished rendering. Batman became more anatomically precise, more asthetically tasteful than before.

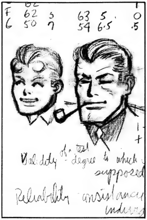
Robinson shared an apartment on 33rd Street with another DC artist, Bernie Kline. They had installed two drawing boards, one of which was so big that two people could work on it at the same time. The flat became a hangout for comic men. Frequently a half dozen artists and writers like Charles Biro, Bob Wood, Mort Meskin and Whit Ellsworth would congregate there to finish a few pages and discuss storytelling techniques

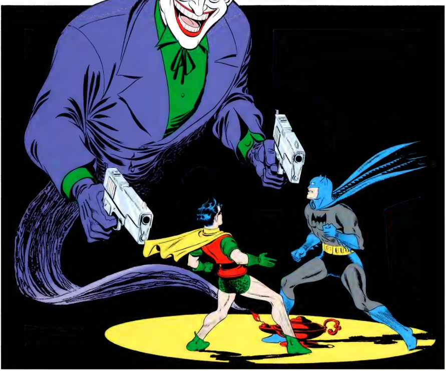

JOKER
JOKER

Left: The original playing card drawn by Jerry Robinson to exhibit his idea for a new kind of villain, The Joker. The card itself was actually used in The Batman strip.

Right: Robinson sketch of Wayne and Grayson done on notebook paper during class.

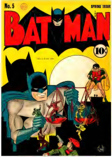
Below: Classic Robinson situation.


F 62 5 63 5 0
G 50 7 54 6.5 .5
Validity of a test - degree to which supposed
Reliability consistancy



or what the competition was doing.

Comic pages were tacked up everywhere. Walls were floor-to-ceiling comic murals. Even the old radio which kept them in touch with the world was covered with so many sketches only the knobs could be seen. The two sofas in the room slept whoever got to them first. The clan ate from tiles peeled from the bathroom walls. If they found the going tough, no one mentioned it. They were too busy creating comics *"golden age."*



Copyright © 1941 National Periodicals

Like Finger, Kane and Robinson depended upon films to inform and educate them in the intricacies of dynamic storytelling. *"We went to see 'Citizen Kane' a dozen times,"* Jerry confirmed.

Then the whole Batman image shifted and settled into its own groove.

Dick Grayson, the son of performers killed in a trapeze accident, became Robin the Boy Wonder in *Detective* 38 April 1940.

Kane says of the character, *"In my subconscious mind I longed to be like Robin when I was his age; a young, carefree daredevil, fighting alongside his idol, Batman (or in my case, Doug Fairbanks, Sr.)*

"I figured Robin would appeal to all children of his age group as an identifiable person for their own inner fantasies; for, after all, what young, red-blooded American boy wouldn't want to join Batman in the exciting world of mystery and adventure?

"As for Robin's costume, I fashioned it after Robin Hood's."

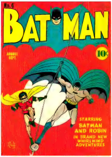
Robin's costume with its red vest (robin red-breast) and yellow cape was functionally puzzling, advertising his presence with an effectiveness that would make public relations men envious. It helped explain why the only 12 year old in the world who could clobber two grown men with ease was constantly being hit from behind.

Used to bait Batman into an inescapable doom-trap, Robin would regain consciousness in time to hear the villain's inevitable soliloquy, which served to clarify the hazier sections of the plot. After a typical formula escape, the dynamic duo plagued their opponents with puns more paralyzing than their punches. *"A heel for a heel,"* was Robin's favorite as he kicked thugs in the jaw while doing handstands.

Author Finger recounts the emergence of Batman's ward like this, *"Robin was an outgrowth of a conversation I had with Bob. As I said, Batman was a combination of Fairbanks and Sherlock Holmes. Holmes had his Watson. The thing that bothered me was that Batman didn't have anyone to talk to, and it got a little tiresome always having him thinking. I found as I went along Batman needed a Watson to talk to. That's how Robin came to be.*

"Bob called me over and said he was going to put a boy in the story to identify with Batman. I thought it was a great idea. I went home and tried to think up names, dozens like Dusty and Scamp. When I went back, Bob and Jerry informed me they already had a name. They'd decided to call him Robin. I always felt Robinson created him from his own name, ROBINson... ROBIN.

"I went home to write the very first story. I gave him a sling shot because I was thinking of David and Goliath in the sense that Robin would be small compared to normal size men. But we felt it would be dangerous so it lasted only a few issues.

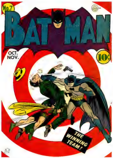

No.6
BATMAN
AUGUST SEPT.
10¢
STARRING BATMAN AND ROBIN IN BRAND NEW WHIRLWIND ADVENTURES

Copyright © 1941 National Periodicals

"Dick Grayson came from the pulps. Frank Merriwell had a half brother Dick, and Grayson came from a book I was reading, edited by Charles Grayson, Jr. The name sounded good.

"I thought of the big brother angle, then Robin got a little easier to write. Making him human was almost impossible because Robin had to echo Batman or ask him sophisticated question."

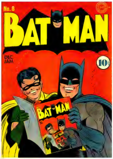
Robinson admits Robin was created out of Robin Hood's image *"in an effort to humanize Batman."* Obviously it was a turning point in the Batman epic, forever ending the image of solitude and menace that typified the early Batman. Previously his character was as strange as any of the twisted foes he encountered. Then compassion entered the scene. Batman had to be an example for the boy. History will bear out the addition of Robin as one of the strip's most salient and important points. Robin certainly must be credited with bearing much of the weight of Batman's longevity.



Copyright © 1941 National Periodicals

Batman soloed for the last time in his own book, Spring 1940. Originally scheduled for *Detective* 38, a last minute switch had substituted the origin of Robin in its place. The splash panel declared Professor Hugo Strange had escaped from prison. After releasing five mental patients from a nearby asylum, Strange transforms them chemically into gigantic insane berserkers that do his bidding. Under Strange's influence they rampage through Gotham terrorizing policemen and wrecking the elevated subway in the grandest Willis O'Brien manner.

Batman discovers their hideout, punches the villain through a window *("I wonder if this is really the end of Prof. Hugo Strange?")* and polishes off three giants. The other two are already on their way to the city. Batman follows in hot pursuit with the aid of his Batplane. Coming abreast of the first truck carrying one of the monsters, Batman dives, machine gun chattering lead death. *"Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary!"* he said, teeth bared.



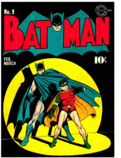
Copyright © 1941 National Periodicals

The last monster climbs an office building attempting to catch the elusive Batplane in an obvious imitation of *King Kong.* Batman drops gas capsules causing the beast-man to hurtle to his death in the street below.

Readers found Batman's use of a gun deplorable. Scripter Finger agreed, *"I goofed. I had Batman use a gun to shoot a villain, and I was called on the carpet by Whit Ellsworth. He said 'Never let us have Batman carry a gun again.' He was right."*

It resulted in DC preparing its own Comics Code which was submitted to every writer and artist on the payroll. Among other conditions it stated there would be no whippings, no hangings, no knifings, no sexual references. Even the word FLICK was forbidden because the lettering might run together. Other companies seemed to use the Code as a "what-to-do" list for their publications.

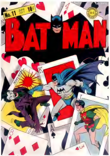
The first Batman issue was even more notable due to the appearance of the comics' first major villain, THE JOKER. As the clown prince of crime he was almost a star in his own right. The Joker was, in fact, the sole creation of Jerry Robinson, *"I felt the time had come when Batman needed a superior villain with which to cope. I wanted a character that embodied the qualities of intrigue and mystery, yet with a great visual flair. He should be sardonic yet possess humor, an element important in his characterization. I got the idea from a playing card."*



Copyright © 1941 National Periodicals

From the beginning, the insanest of glints twinkled in the eyes of Batman's adversaries. Dr. Death and Hugo Strange were forerunners of the super foes that would repeatedly plague the cowled crimefighter. Monopolizing DC's best villains, Batman's rogues gallery was populated with criminals bearing pulp lineage.

But first and foremost was The Joker. Taken from the playing card almost intact, this chalk-faced harlequin



Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals

with his psychotic grin and mossy green hair injected his sleeping victims with a drug that caused death in 24 hours. Then he publicly predicted their fates. Victims expired with sardonic death-grins stamped on their faces, the calling card of The Joker.

The Joker operated in bizarre irrational patterns, the logic of which never became evident until the conclusion of the story. Leaving a trail of mordant laughter and madness, the cagey clown could only be defeated by the dynamic duo once one of his grim jokes turned out to be on him. The Joker was number one, and everybody knew it.

Finger had written both Joker tales that appeared in issue 1 and confessed that the ghoulish jester had originally died in the second story.

"Whit Ellsworth said 'Bill, are you crazy; we have a great character here. So the last panel was redrawn with an ambulance and a line of dialogue that said he would live, thanks to Ellsworth."

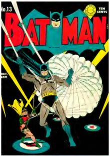
Finger also remembers calling Kane's attention to a picture he had torn from Grosset and Dunlap's book version of *The Man Who Laughs.* It was a perfect reference from the film showing Conrad Veidt's mouth pulled bizarrely back into a twisted, horrific grin.

A host of other villains were successively spawned from the same matrix. Like The Joker, THE CATWOMAN also pussy-footed thru *Batman* 1.

A frenzied female with green eyes who wore a cat costume, she brandished a cat-o-nine-tails and drove a Kittycar. Exploiting every feline angle, The Catwoman used her nine lives to become the first lady of crime. That is, a woman first, a crime queen second. The Catwoman's vanity was her primary motivation. Too true to her nature, she fell in love with both Batman and Bruce Wayne, eventually fighting side by side with the caped crusader before returning to the alluring excitement of her criminal acts.

The third member of the ruling triumverate that unquestionably deserves the highest niche in Batman's hall of infamy was TWO-FACE *(Detective* 66). A handsome assistant D.A. Harvey Kent was transformed into a twisted tormented being by a vengeful criminal who threw acid into Kent's face. Half remained untouched. The other half was scarred into an evil mask of distorted, purplish flesh. The face remade the man.

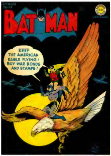
Two-Face was obviously inspired by a 1938 issue of The Shadow which featured *Face of Doom,* a highly similar tale. This simultaneous Jekyll and Hyde was also the blueprint for Dick Tracy villain Split-Face.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals

Two-Face wore a suit to match his visage: One half was expensive, well-tailored, impeccably tasteful. The other was ragged, wrinkled and ostentatious. Two-Face scarred one half of a double-headed coin, the lucky piece of the gangster who disfigured him. He flipped it George Raft style before every crime to decide whether he or charity would get the loot.

This aspect of internal conflict and the alternating dominance of good and evil made Two-Face one of the most fascinating villains the comics produced. Two-Face added still more color to his "two" as his personal symbol of crime. He would rob the passengers of a two-wheeled hansom cab or a double-decker bus, pilfer the receipts from a theatre playing a twin-bill and make his escape on a motorcycle, bicycle or another two-wheeled vehicle. His inventiveness within such self-imposed limitations was often astounding.

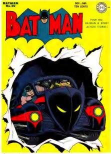

BATMAN
KEEP THE AMERICAN EAGLE FLYING ! BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS !

Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

Plastic surgery put an end to his double dealing career but not to several imitators who committed crimes in his name. Another Two-Face came into existence when an actor recreating Harvey Dent's (his name was inexplicably changed) life was similarly scarred by an exploding Klieg light. The original returned once more when a dynamite blast shattered Dent's plastic surgery. The surgeon had warned him the work couldn't be redone.

Two-Face was visually symbolic of his own dilemma, diametrically opposing forces meeting head-on in one man's mind. Consequently, he was the most striking of Batman's opponents.

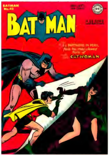
Fading horror actor Basil Karlo donned the ghastly green make-up of CLAYFACE, his most famous role, and began frenetically stabbing the stars of his former studio in *Detective* 40. Committed by Batman and Robin, Karlo repeatedly escaped the local nut house to again become the cloaked Clayface.


BATMAN
No.20
DEC.-JAN.
TEN CENTS
BATMAN
FOUR BIG BATMAN & ROBIN ACTION STORIES!

Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

THE PENGUIN, that pompous waddling master of fowl play, used umbrellas of all shapes and sizes to rain harrassment down on the dynamic duo beginning in *Detective* 58. THE SCARECROW was an Ichabod Crane-ish teacher who decided he was in the wrong field. A housing shortage in Wonderland forced TWEELEDUM and TWEEDLEDEE to invade our world with ingenious schemes involving their identical nature. THE CRIME DOCTOR healed criminals and prescribed cures for their poorly planned crimes.

THE CAVALIER was a swaggering swashbuckler wielding an electrified sword who stole for the thrill of it. Edward E. Nigma, THE RIDDLER, was a psychotic who could not commit a crime without leaving a clue. His perplexing puzzles perpetually led to prison. The Batman coterie of criminals was a highly exclusive club. They formed the underworld elite. A madder tea party there never was.



Copyright © 1947 National Periodicals

"The Penguin came out of an article in the Saturday Evening Post on Emperor penguins," Finger explains. *"They looked like Englishmen in a fancy club. I decided the character had to have two things, a tuxedo-like costume with a top hat, and an umbrella. I made umbrellas with gimmicks, all weapons which would give him character. I decided to make the villain funny but in a diabolical manner. I used the theme of birds. I bought books on birds and collected hundreds of articles for reference.*

"The Catwoman also. National Geographic had a great issue on cats. I used that, Bartlett's book of Quotations and the Dictionary to invent puns about cats. Very methodical. The same with Two-Face. I looked up everything that had to do with two. The whole idea was to carry the character of Jekyll and Hyde. Two-Face, incidentally, was Bob's idea. Clayface was a take-off on the Phantom of the Opera."

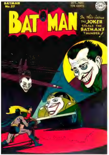
Batman and Robin was seen regularly in *World's Finest* as well as *Detective* and *Batman.* In *Superman* 76, the man of steel teamed with the dynamic duo, disclosing his secret identity in exchange for theirs. This prompted all three to move into the *World's Finest* slot with issue 71, share billing and invariably come to each other's rescue. Throughout the late 40's, Robin soloed in 65 issues of *Star-Spangled Comics.*

Of necessity the most perspicacious of super heroes, Batman fought more with his mind than his muscles. His cases were like chess games. He could strike once he was in position but powerful maneuvering himself there required intellect. His multitude of mechanical paraphernalia was an extension of his mind and an emulation of radio's Green Hornet.

The Hornet had his faithful sidekick Kato. Batman had Robin. But besides his mask and crime-fighting gadgetry, the Green Hornet also sported a sleek, powerful limousine he endearingly called Black Beauty. Batman was not to be outdone.

A high-powered auto with a lightning bolt painted on its side, an open-top blue roadster and a red convertible officially called "the Batmobile" were among the first conveyances to carry Batman and Robin in pursuit of their quarry. The Batmobile of 1941 finally lived up to its name by displaying super-chargers, a dorsal fin and a bat-head bat-tering ram for a nose. During a high-speed chase in 1950, the 1941 model flipped off a bridge and crashed. While laid up in the hospital, Batman designed the new Batmobile which was utilized to track criminal prey through the remainder of the story.

This model was the automotive archetype that became the classic Batmobile. Complete with bucket seats, TV and radar screens, a plastic bubble windshield, a searchlight that projected the bat-symbol, headlights able to penetrate the densest fog, radar antennae inside a monstrous tail-fin, rocket tubes, a knife-edge steel nose for cutting through barriers and an entire laboratory with a work bench, stool, and built-in cabinets, the Batmobile seemed capable of dwindling the Wayne fortune with gas bills alone.

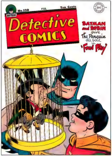

BATMAN
No.37
OCT.-NOV.
TEN CENTS
DC
BATMAN
In this issue THE JOKER STEALS THE BATMAN'S THUNDER!

Copyright © 1946 National Periodicals

Customized throughout the decade, the Batmobile's front fenders were squared and its doors exchanged for a bubble that tilted back. The dinosaur was finally traded in for a sporty, compact 1965 model, the first Batmobile to cope with the realities of traffic.

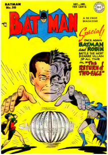
The Batplane underwent a similar evolution from the Batgyro, virtually a helicopter supporting a huge bat form, through a two-seat prop-plane later modified with a bat-nose and jet propulsion, to the needle-nosed Batplane II, containing virtually everything under the moon. Batman's personal effects also included a plethora of various batarangs, lassoes, utility belts, components and costumes for all occasions. He was to need every one of them.

Batman and Robin rarely combatted the Axis powers, the major exception being Columbia's 1943 serial *BATMAN AND ROBIN* which chronicled their efforts against Dr. Daka and the slaves of the rising sun. Lewis Wilson and Douglas Croft starred. In 1948 the duo returned to the Columbia lot in *THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BATMAN AND ROBIN* in which Robert Lowery and Johnny Duncan checkmated the criminal activities of The Wizard.


No.120
FEB.
Ten Cents
DC
Detective COMICS
BATMAN and ROBIN give The Penguin the bird in 'Foul Play'

Copyright © 1946 National Periodicals

When Weisinger left for a term in the service he brought Jack Schiff in as his replacement. Dick and Dave Wood began writing part of the Batman saga, then Don Cameron added his literary talents. Cameron developed the habit of writing amusing asides into his scripts like, *"And then Batman, the clumsy oaf, drops the box...!"* He and Finger once planned a parody called Batmitzvah and Robinowitz, the Boy Wonder, with Bruce Weinstein. It was much like the Mad Comics version years later entitled *Batboy and Rubin.*

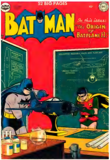

BATMAN
No.50
DEC.-JAN.
TEN CENTS
DC
BATMAN
A 52 PAGE MAGAZINE
Special!
ONCE AGAIN BATMAN and ROBIN BATTLE THE MOST BIZARRE VILLAIN OF ALL TIME in "The RETURN of TWO-FACE"

Copyright © 1947 National Periodicals

Bill Finger still reigned as Batman scribe pre-eminent. Even though he was frequently late with his stories, he worked hard, often sweating out a script until the very last minute, sometimes writing complete scripts overnight. Finger had a marvelous visual literacy and always wrote for the artist. He had developed a system that would be used by others including Weisinger who credits Bill with teaching him the intricacies of comic storytelling.

"I began to accumulate material, a swipe file on locations and occupations. I would buy copies of Popular Science and Popular Mechanics which covered every subject imaginable. I'd clip them and give these drawings to Bob Kane along with the story. I once found an article on a giant typewriter used for an exhibition at a trade show and used it as a prop in a script. It started the "big prop" stories. They were my backgrounds. I'd have Batman go from A to B in one panel and from C to D in the next. I'd also collect slang material, occupational slang, and make it part of my gimmicks for Batman.

"The Bat-cave came directly out of Popular Science. It had a cross-section drawing of underground hangars and how planes could be drawn up with winches. I cut that out and said 'By god that's great.' And I gave the drawing to Bob. He copied it line for line, adding the stalactites and stalagmites for the mysterious touch.


52 BIG PAGES
10¢
DC
BATMAN
In this issue: "The ORIGIN of BATPLANE II!"

Copyright © 1950 National Periodicals

"Batman was a tricky character to write. I had a gimmick book of little odd facts along with the slang. If I were doing a story about the railroad, I would try to get some angles on the railroad that people wouldn't know about and use them as clues or story points."

The overall look of the pages was dark and intriguing. Odd-shaped panels fit metaphorically together in jigsaw patterns. Blueprints, littered with explanatory boxes and arrows, added to the heavy, diagramatic look so appropriate for a detective book.

After a few years, others lent their talents to Batman's proceedings as the demand for more stories developed. Jack Burnley who created Starman and turned out a wealth of DC comics told, *"I ghosted quite a few covers for Action, Adventure, World's Finest, Superman and Batman Comics. I also pencilled all of the Batman Sunday comic strips and a few of the dailies. Charlie Paris did most of the inking. I also pencilled a few stories for Batman Comics. A lot of the inkers always wanted to work on my stuff because I put in every detail and didn't leave a lot of the background detail for the inker to put in as he went along.*

"Bob Kane did the pencils for the newspaper strip and some of the Batman stories in World's Finest, Detective and Batman Comics. Bob had wonderful imagination in his penciled layouts and his own art style was good for that early comics period."

Robinson began working over Kane's layouts, eventually turning out his own stories. George Roussos did backgrounds, lettering and inks. Fred Ray pitched in for a few covers.

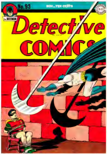
In the mid-40's Paris inked Dick Sprang's pencils. Hal Sherman and Curt Swan turned out volumes of material. Edmond Hamilton, Al Schwartz, Otto Binder, Bill Woolfolk and others later contributed their own share of Bat-scripts. Unlike most strips that decline with the absence of the original artist, Batman improved.

Alfred, the Wayne's butler, white-haired Commissioner Gordon and Vicki Vale, girl reporter, played increasingly large parts as the 40's drew to a close. Human interest stories warmed their way into the book. Every Christmas Batman saved someone's daddy from an undeserved doom on the electric chair and helped him reform. The stories were geniunely touching. Batman became one of the better written comic books of the decade.

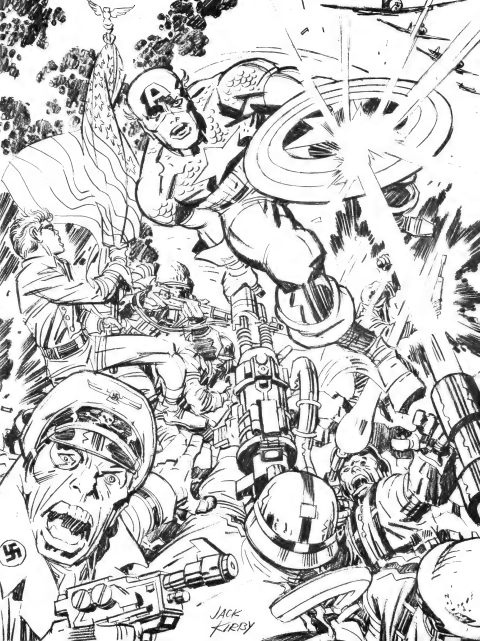
Toward the mid-50's National's fog machine broke down and Batman turned to less atmospheric fare, battling monsters, aliens, robots and giant you-name-its. The same fate that befell Superman descended upon Batman. Batwoman, Batgirl, Bat-Mite and Ace, the Bathound were introduced.

Yet, the charisma that surrounded Batman continued to lure readers even if the content was geared to have a more juvenile appeal. Generations continued to be caught up in his claustrophobic crimeworld, and the name Batman became synonymous with comics.

Ten years passed before Batman would return to his former glory. ■



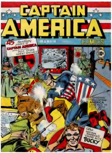
Copyright © 1944 National Periodicals


JACK
KIRBY

THE AMERICAN IDOL

The headline screamed off the front pages in 20 line caps: America was at war. While fighting mem mobilized to invade the European theatre, industries sprang up to feed the war effort. Guns, bombs, planes, tanks were produced with teeth-clenching tenacity.

And from the conflict emerged the quintessential heroic figure – the comics had found a reason to exist.

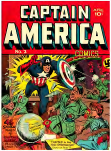

CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS
45 Thrilling pages of CAPTAIN AMERICA PLUS OTHER GREAT FEATURES
10¢
SMASHING THRU, CAPTAIN AMERICA CAME FACE TO FACE WITH HITLER
Also CAPTAIN AMERICA'S YOUNG ALLY, BUCKY

Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

CAPTAIN AMERICA burst like a thunderbolt into the melee of the comic world, overwhelming his existing brotherhood of super heroes with furious urgency. He premiered full-blown in his own book (April 1941) delivering a smashing right to Hitler's jaw on the cover, underscoring with implicit imagery the fervor of American discontent.

Epitomizing both the grandiose flamboyancy of super heroes and the flag-waving spirit of nationalism, Captain America was the consummate chauvinist and the most absolute of certain successes.

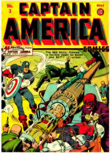
Cap saluted encouragingly from the splash panel as case number one colorfully unfolded with the problem of weeding out fifth columnists rooted in the army. President F.D.R. himself asked, *"What would you suggest, gentlemen? A character out of the comic books? Perhaps the Human Torch in the army would solve our problems!"*



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Professor Reinstein offered a similar solution – a serum that transformed sickly Steve Rogers into Captain America, *"the first of a corps of super agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs!"* But, an enemy agent in the guise of a government official kills Reinstein, sole possessor of the formula, before the revitalized Rogers finishes him off. The first and last of the new race of supermen, Cap becomes *"a by-word of terror in the shadow-world of spies!"*

Enlisting in the Army, Steve Rogers is stationed at Camp Lehigh where camp mascot Bucky Barnes discovers Rogers' other identity, a feat which inexplicably entitles him to become Cap's partner. Army life is rounded out by the irascible Sgt. Duffy whose favorite pastime is condemning Pvt. Rogers to peeling potatoes, and Betty Ross tossed in as the token female of the strip.


No. 3
CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS
MAY 10
45 Thrilling pages CAPTAIN AMERICA PLUS OTHER FEATURES
The RED SKULL Planned a Horrible Death for BUCKY and BETTY – unless....

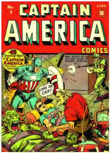
Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

The pulp formula was applied with all the subtlety of an exploding buzz bomb. Ordinary, run-of-the-mill, punching bag brutes and lemon-yellow oriental ancients just weren't good enough. Villains had to be wizened grotesqueries with gnarled hands and faces, dripping jowls and foam-flecked fangs. A legion of hideous monstrosities sprang up to populate the pages of Timely's *parvenu* success.

Cap and Bucky dove into the jaws of hell to tangle with the most spine-chilling of maniacs: *the Ageless Oriental Who Wouldn't Die, the Wax Statue That Struck Death, the Unholy Legion, Ivan the Terrible, the Fake Money Fiends, the Ringmaster of Death, the Killers of the Bund.*

Tales inevitably came from the secret files about *Fang, Arch-Fiend of the Orient, the Hangman, the Whistling Death, the Black Witch, the White Death, the Black Talon* and *the Phantom Hound of Cardiff Moor.*

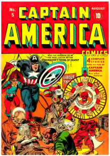
Death Loaded the Bases, Horror Played the Scales, Murder Stalked the Manuevers, Cap registered *in the Hotel of Horror,* was *Trapped in the Nazi Stronghold,* became *a Patient in the Horror Hospital.*



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Stories bristled with menace. Villains became blacker. Titles became longer. *The Hunchback of Hollywood and the Movie Murders, The Queer Case of the Murdering Butterfly and the Ancient Mummies, The Gruesome Secret of the Dragon of Death* and *The Strange Mystery of the Ruby of the Nile and its Heritage of Horror.*

And, above everything stood the immaculate figure of Captain America infallible, majestic in his glistening uniform of red, white and blue, supreme in shirt of chain mail, buccaneer boots and winged helmet.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

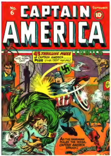
Those that were critical of his two-dimensional character failed to grasp the true implication of his being. Steve Rogers never existed, except perhaps as an abstract device for the convenience of storytelling. Captain America was not an embodiment of human characteristics but a pure idea. He was not a man but all men; not a being but a cumulative god that symbolized the inner reality of man. He was the American truth.

The face unrevealed behind the mask was ours. The shield was a visual metaphor for two hundred years of democratic freedom. The backbone behind it all was the growing defense effort, and the sinew and stamina 16,353,659 fighting men in the service of their country.

More than any other fictional creation, Captain America represented the ideological duel between good and evil. Upon examination it is an archetype of opposing forces locked in a death struggle, almost mythical in its simplicity. And this, in fact, is what the comic hero is all about.

Cap was an American manifestation of an American art form. Did the Germans have a Leutnant Nazi or the Japs a Super-Tojo?.

The most immediate problem then was to give Cap an opponent worthy of his stature. Theseus had the Minotaur, Beowulf had Grendel, Siegfried had his Dragon. And Captain America...THE RED SKULL. Spawned from the Nazi terror, he too found his malevolent way into the premiere issue.


No. 6
CAPTAIN AMERICA
SEPTEMBER
10¢
COMICS
45 THRILLING PAGES OF CAPTAIN AMERICA PLUS OTHER GREAT FEATURES
AS THE HANGMAN PULLED THE NOOSE, CAPTAIN AMERICA STRUCK!

Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

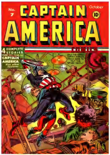
Like his adversary, the Red Skull was not a man but evil incarnate, the figment of a nightmare suddenly manifest in the real, ordinary world of comics. He was to return again and again over a period of thirty years never dying, his immortality proving conclusively his nature as a non-human entity.

He was the ultimate vision of anarchistic evil. Malice, murder, hatred, fear and revenge ever rallied round him. Cadaverous and repelling with his crimson headpiece (we were never sure it was one), the Red Skull was feared even by the Nazis who claimed his allegiance. Skull and shoulders above the rest, he reigned as the *advocatus diaboli* of comics.

Captain America was an unprecedented success. The first issue sold out. The super hero business became the comic publishers Holy Grail.

Suddenly every company, Timely included, began spawning a profusion, nay, a teeming multitude of red, white and blue, starred and striped and spangled imitations.

Cap turned around and discovered an army of stand-ins waiting to jump on the patriotic bandwagon. The Americanization of comics had begun. There was the American Avenger, The American Crusader, The American Eagle, Commando Yank, Fighting Yank, Mr. Liberty, and U.S. Jones.

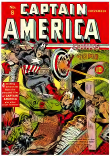

No. 7
CAPTAIN AMERICA
October
10¢
COMICS
4 COMPLETE STORIES OF CAPTAIN AMERICA Plus other features

Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Some copied his stars and stripes. Yank and Doodle, Yankee Boy, Yankee Eagle, Yankee Doodle Jones, The Pioneer, The Defender, The Liberator, The Sentinel, The Scarlet Sentry, Spirit of '76, Super-American, Citizen V, Johnny Rebel, The Flag, The Flagman, The Unknown Soldier, and Citizen Smith, son of The Unknown Soldier.

Some even copied his name. Captain Flag, Captain Freedom, Captain Courageous, Captain Glory, Captain Red Cross, Captain V, Captain Valiant, and Captain Victory.

Major Liberty and Major Victory even tried to outrank him.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

The girls were there too. Liberty Belle, Miss America, Miss Victory, Pat Patriot and Yankee Girl.

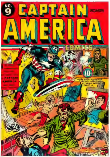
It seems like there must have been thousands of them.

Within three months the population explosion had become so rampant that Timely issued the following statement: *"IMITATORS BEWARE! Now that Captain America has attained such a vast following, many comic books are attempting to copy his costume and deeds. The publishers of Captain America hereby serve notice that they will prosecute to the full extent of the law any and all such acts of infringement. THERE IS ONLY ONE CAPTAIN AMERICA!"*

The notice was accompanied by an illustration of an irate Cap raising his shield in a very hostile gesture. There was no need to worry. No facsimile was reasonable enough. There was only one Captain America!

With a visionary skill that would be typical throughout his career, Jack Kirby, with his new partner Joe Simon, precipitiously gave birth to Timely's most sensational and successful strip. And, in so doing, literally became the father of the action hero.

Like most of the men in the comic business, Kirby was born in a New York City walk-up, August 28, 1917. Rarely at his Suffolk Street tenement home, he spent his early years browsing, buffeting and brawling in his native lower east side turf. It was to serve him well years later when he would conjure up street visions for an idea he called THE NEWSBOY LEGION.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

"Book readers weren't recognized as a high type; I had to read on the sly, in hallways and under porches." Jack played it safe. Any kid found with his nose in a book would most likely find it bloodied, if not broken, by the neighborhood gang. *"Science-fiction was certain death."* Jack recollects, *"but I read everything from Tom Swift to Tarzan anyway."*

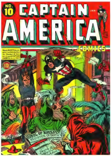
Then he began reading the classics: *Robin Hood, Treasure Island, The Count of Monte Cristo.* The illustrations were an inspiration to the impressionable Kirby. *"Nathan Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish were great; Howard Pyle was my favorite."* Jack began to draw at age eleven.

His affinity for art was evident early. The Kirby kitchen table was forever heaped with volumes of books lugged stealthily home from library shelves. Jack studied fervently, learned from the masters the ways of composition and perspective, anatomy and technique. *"I was there through rickety childhood, through obnoxious and sullen adolescence, in the shadow of the chipped, brick walls of the slum, my first drawing board,"* Kirby remembers.

He read Rider Haggard, Burroughs and H. G. Wells. Here, at last, a place to escape from the harsh reality of existence. Then, in his early teens, Kirby discovered the science fiction pulps: *Amazing, Wonder* and *Astounding Stories,* Hugo Gernsback, Ray Cummings, P. Schuyler Miller, John Campbell, Clark Ashton Smith, Stanton Coblentz and, of course, "Doc" Smith.

The seeds were planted, Jack became an inveterate day-dreamer. Romantic extravaganzas of the past and future, myths and scientific imagery merged in a fusion of endless high fantasy with Kirby always the central figure, a handsome demigod saving maidens from monsters.

Dreams helped blot out the poverty of his and the country's depression. As an astronaut he was lost in the asteroid belt of Saturn, repelling horrendous invaders from outer space, exploring microcosmic dimensions. His world of rococo space fleets, anti-grav belts, death-ray machines and steely-eyed six footers would never give way to more believable, less glamourous men like balding John Glenn and compact Gherman Titov.



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Up to now Kirby was no different than most children who tell themselves tales in which they function as powerful figures, enjoying the pleasures of not only the adult world as they conceive it but of a world of wonders unlike our reality.

Kirby digested a ton of imaginative fiction with indulgent voracity. *"I still have a stack of science fiction pulps,"* he noted recently. Like most of us, Jack needed the idea of a place alternative to this one.

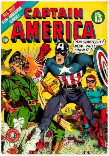
So he began to create the best of all possible worlds...his own.

For a moment things began to look promising. Enrolled at Pratt Institute, his formal training was cut short. Kirby's father, a tailor in the garment district, was to lose his job later that very afternoon. Jack took a job hawking newspapers in the street the following day. He was 14.

It was only natural then that Kirby's attention should turn with heated interest to the comic strip, an amalgam of art and heroic adventure. He read Nowland's BUCK ROGERS, assayed Gould's DICK TRACY, studied Raymond's FLASH GORDON, was inspired by Caniff's TERRY.

And, there were the films!

Jack was enthralled, spending countless hours in neighborhood theatres. Financed by a handful of change saved from his paper sales, he often spent a whole day watching the idols' derring-do.


ALL OUT FOR AMERICA ISSUE!
CAPTAIN AMERICA
NO. 13
10¢
YOU STARTED IT! NOW- WE'LL FINISH IT!

Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Kirby was getting an education studying the manner of directors like John Ford, Victor Fleming and Howard Hawks. He learned about suspense and horror from James Whale, Tod Browning and Karl Freund. From De Mille, William Wyler, Lewis Milestone, Michael Curtiz and the Korda Brothers, he learned the ways of spectacle.

Chaplin, Keaton, Turpin, Valentino, Swanson, Barrymore, Chaney, Fairbanks, Flynn, all contributed to Kirby's repository of cinematic knowledge.

"My fantasies concentrated around the movies." He viewed screen flicks like *The Lost World, Wings, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Les Miserables, Little Caesar, Public Enemy* and a film that was to make the most profound impression on him, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. *"I began to dramatize, I wanted to tell a story the way the movies did."*

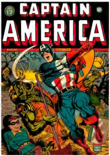
Barely 18, Jack began his career as an artist. During the next year he was to learn the secrets of motion, the most important element in formulating his action style. *"I landed a job in a small syndicate servicing weekly newspapers. From there to the Max Fleischer animation studios, where, for negligible wages, I learned that the human body, in motion, has value and beauty. When Popeye and Betty Boop took their initial steps to throw their pies, it was my job to complete the movement and the speed of the action. This operation was called inbetweening."*

The first costumed hero strip to which Kirby was to apply his imaginative pencil was Fox's BLUE BEETLE. He drew a series of daily newspaper strips before moving to his preferred metier.

Jack tells it this way, *"When comic magazines blossomed as a field, I leaped in and drew for anyone who would let me tell a story. I became a variety of names, unleashing a torrent of diverse characters. Super heroes were replacing human beings."*

He worked for Will Eisner and Sam Iger to help produce *Jumbo*, a big black and white comic. Kirby did WILTON OF THE WEST as Fred Sande, THE DIARY OF DR. HAYWARD, using the *nom de plume* Curt Davis and THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO as Jack Cortez.

Collaborating with Frank Robbins (pre-Johnny Hazard), he turned out a western strip, LIGHTNIN' AND THE LONE RIDER calling himself Lance Kirby. Under the pseudonym Michael Griffith, he wrote, pencilled and inked COSMIC CARSON in *Science Comics* and THE SOLAR LEGION in *Crash*.



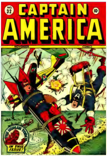
Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

In *Mystery Men*, he created WING TURNER and signed it Floyd Kelly. THE BLACK OWL and TED O'NEIL in *Prize Comics* bore the Kirby look. He originated MR. SCARLET for Fawcett's *Wow Comics*.

Having met Joe Simon, who was an editor at Fox, the two teamed up on BLUE BOLT. Jack did his first cover, depicting that hero in his eternal battle against the enchanting Green Goddess. They stayed for 10 issues. Kirby's Mittyesque daydreaming had finally begun to pay off.

Simon switched over to Timely as editor. Kirby followed, pencilling, inking and writing MERCURY as Martin A. Bursten and COMET PIERCE using his own name for the first time in *Red Raven* (August 1940).

A colorful profusion of comic characters began to emerge from his prolific pen. Artists began to mimic his free-action style, his dynamic brush technique.



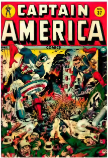
Copyright © 1943 Marvel Comics Group

Simon and Kirby did THE VISION in *Marvel Mystery*, MARVEL BOY, THE FIERY MASK and CAPTAIN DARING in *Daring Mystery* a batch of covers and even a smattering of S–F pulp illustration in *Marvel Stories*. While the Kirby pencil was occupied with its prodigious output, Joe Simon kept busy in his own capacity editing, writing, plotting, handling production details and occasionally pencilling and inking.

"The production pressure was overwhelming" Kirby revealed, *"I had to draw faster and faster, and the figures began to show it. Arms got longer, legs bent to the action, torsos twisted with exaggerated speed. My pace created distortions. I discovered the figures had to be extreme to have impact, the kind of impact I saw in my head."* Kirby chartered on a trial-and-error basis, the unknown limits of a radically new art. He developed a kind of impressionistic shorthand. He made the difficult look easy, the impossible an everyday occurance.

"Long underwear heroes were a dime a dozen. Everybody was creating one, and publishers couldn't get them fast enough. SUPERMAN set the style; we had to keep the pace and come up with a winner."

Then, early in 1941, his talents coalesced into an achievement.

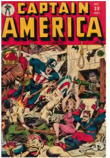


Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

Of necessity, Captain America was born. *"The time demanded it. I was seeing mankind in its noblest terms, human beings not as they are but as they might be. The country was almost at war; we needed a super-patriot,"* Kirby recalls.

The visual inspiration was, of course, obvious. *"Drape the flag on anything and it looks good. We gave him a chain mail shirt and a shield, like a modern-day crusader. The wings on his helmet were from Mercury, god of speed. He symbolized the American dream. It had to be done that way."*

The late Ed Herron, Jack's friend, wrote a few early Captain America adventures and created the Red Skull, comics villain supreme.



Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

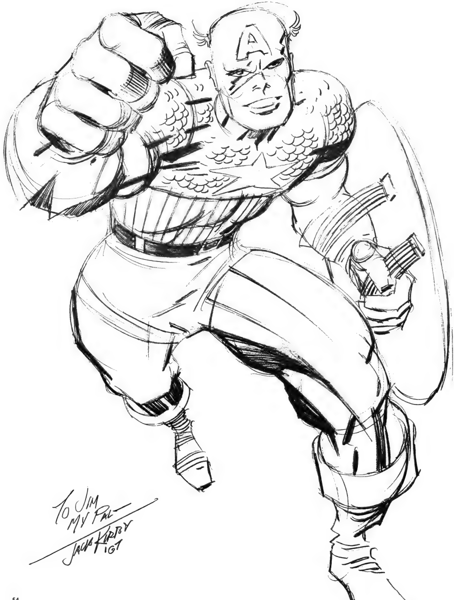
Cap's prosperity stimulated Timely to add more titles: *All-Winners, USA* and *All-Select*, all starring the big "A" himself.

Originally triangular with three stars and seven stripes, Cap's shield became round with the second issue. No one seems to remember quite why. Whether for the purpose of function or design, the change worked. At the same time Cap's cowl was lengthened to cover his neck and surround his ears. On Cap's costume could be found some of the stripes some of the time but not all of the stripes all of the time. It didn't matter; stripes didn't make the man.

Kirby's mastery was implicit in every line and gesture and punch. Cap leaped from the tops of panels. Muscles rippled. Limbs stretched. Backs arched. Movements were magnified, actions aggrandized. Body english was more extreme than reality allowed. Jack reinvented the human figure. Embodiments of exageration, they soared out of panels.

Muscles medical students never even heard of were exerted in symphonies of strength. Cap and Bucky moved with jolting, violent speed. Mass battle scenes were expertly choreographed. Stories became pure orchestrations of motion.

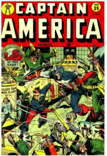
Though others like Reed Crandall and Mort Meskin helped in the delivery


To Jim
My Pal—
Jack Kirby
'67

by assisting on pencils and inks, Captain America was Jack Kirby's baby. He frequently "inked over" the work of others to give the final product the "Kirby look." He developed a bold open stroke with a number three sable brush that typified his inking style. Everything, but everything, seemed to have a shine.

From the heights of action and ideals to the depths of hatred and horror the Kirby pencil drew only extremes, all of them extremely effective. Panel sizes ran grandly off the deep end. Issue 4 featured the first full page panel in comics, pencilled and inked by Jack himself. Number 5 had a full page cut-away of the interior of the Great Sea Dragon, a Jap sub whose immense hull housed an armada of battleships and could easily swallow a fleet whole.

With issue 6 the tradition of Kirby double-page spreads began. The medium was utilized with staggering impact. Kirby was the first comic book artist to steadily employ visual dynamics. As he says, *"I became a camera and evolved a storytelling style that came closest to motion pictures."* He hasn't been out of work since.

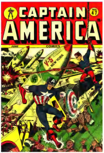


Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

The Kirby formula: a maximum of excitement in a minimum of time and space. If SUPERMAN and BATMAN were the foundations of the business, CAPTAIN AMERICA formed the cornerstone of the industry. Kirby more than any other artist, *Captain America* more than any other title and Timely more than any other publisher, injected the essence of the pulps into comic books.

Simon and Kirby created filler features for Timely like TUK, CAVE-BOY, HURRICANE and FATHER TIME. They initiated the kid gang genre with THE YOUNG ALLIES (Summer 1941) and the short lived TOUGH KID'S SQUAD (March 1942). Then, because of ensuing financial disagreements, the team moved from Timely to National. Kirby had done a total of thirty-five Captain America stories.

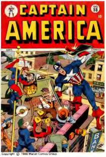
A quarter of a century would elapse before Kirby would once again breathe life into what he considers to be his magnum opus.



Copyright © 1945 Marvel Comics Group

A half-dozen artists and writers scrambled to fill in the ensuing gap. Captain America's popularity continued to swell. He became a household word.

His propagandic effect was awesome. If nothing else, comics taught their readers who the enemy was and what they stood for. The depiction of the Nazi horde with their branding irons and exotic torture machines was undoubtedly an understatement. Those who saw the concentration camps, gas chambers, furnaces and lamp shades will testify to it.

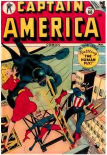


Copyright © 1946 Marvel Comics Group

A half-page ad in Cap's first issue called for all red-blooded young Americans to join the Sentinels of Liberty. One thin dime, one tenth of a dollar is all that stood between any kid and a real official badge and membership card that read, *"I, the undersigned, solemnly pledge to uphold the principles of the Sentinels of Liberty and assist Captain America in his fight upon the enemies who attempt treason against the United States of America."*

Later ads proudly proclaimed, *"Our goal...100,000 members by July 4th and it looks like we'll make it!!"* Response warranted a club news page that was drenched with patriotism. In issue 33, Cap proclaimed, *"I have just received word from Uncle Sam that the metal used in Captain America badges is now sorely needed for ammunition. Do not send any more dimes for badges."* Bucky added thoughtfully, *"How about using that dime for a war savings stamp."*

Then, in a move unprecedented in the history of comics, Timely offered to match, dime for dime, every contribution sent to the War Department. *"Remember: Your dime may pay for the bullet which will finish off the last Jap!"* It might be fun to count the planes, tanks, ships and subs that Cap alone destroyed during the war. The figure has to be astronomical.



Copyright © 1947 Marvel Comics Group

Later, Cap rallied the Sentinels for still another urgent message. *"You can do your part in winning this war by joining the waste paper drive! Do it now,...this minute!"* Cap shouted as Bucky demonstrated the finer points of bailing newspapers with Huck Finnish exuberance.

No one could accuse Captain America and his publishers of shirking any responsibility he may have gained by virtue of his position as patriot number one. He began crushing the Axis in earnest with number 13, the *All Out For America* issue.

Throughout the 40's Cap battled a host of villains, including the Red Skull, the Seven Sons of Satan, Mother Wong, the Red Skull, the Coughing Killer, Dr. Necrosis, the Red Skull, the Mad Torso, the Leopard Woman, the Murdering Mummy, the Laughing Sphinx and the Red Skull. Stories were handled with pulp fiction magniloquence by Stan Lee, Otto Binder, Bill Finger and Manly Wade Wellman among others.

The artistic chores were primarily handled by Al Avison, Vince Alascia and Syd Shores. Also Alex Schomburg whose covers were literally festooned with complexities of men and machines. Each was a labor of love; he could never have been paid for all the work he put into them.

In 1943 Republic Pictures honored Cap with a serial that packed in the action like sardines in a can. Minus his shield, wings and Bucky, Cap became a crusading District Attorney. Dick Purcell starred, Dale Van Sickel and Dave Sharpe stunted. Drafted a month before it was released. Kirby was never to see the film.

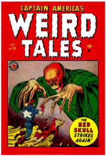
Captain America's popularity varied in direct proportion to the intensity of the war. Sentimentality allowed him to linger on after World War II was over. In 1944 the first of Cap's crime-oriented covers appeared, and he began countering bizarre criminals who perpetrated strange crimes. Somehow, Captain America's costume seemed incongruous with this new line of work.

The art and the scripts were good. The big "A" was as tall and handsome as ever, but something was wrong. His time had run out. Captain America was a premise gone astray. He had outlived his usefulness. The barometer told the story; sales began to drop.

In issue 58, Steve Rogers had switched from army khakis to civilian clothes. By number 60, he had enigmatically become a teacher at Lee (get it?) High School complete with briar pipe and school marm spectacles.

An abortive attempt in 1948 to beef up sales with sex appeal culminated in the introduction of Cap's new partner.

He revealed his identity to Betsy Ross in issue 66 and groomed her as his new assistant, Golden Girl. Bucky had been hurt. Cap said, *"Betsy will help me until you get well again!"* Bucky replied, *"Don't worry, I'll be back in action sooner than you think!"* Cap kissed the girl. Bucky wasn't seen again.



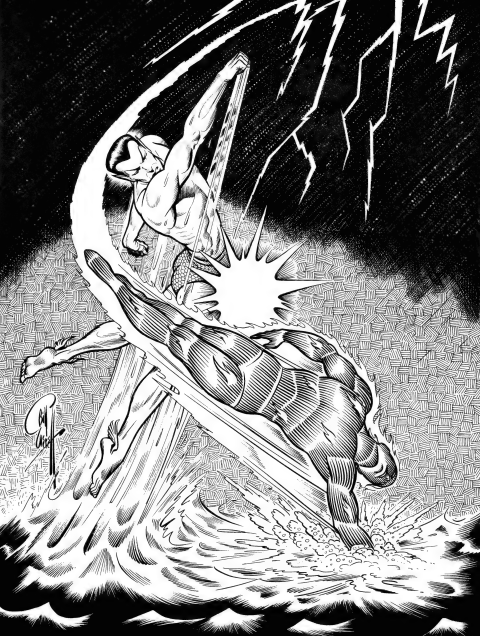
Copyright © 1949 Marvel Comics Group

The changing trend in the industry altered Cap's book to *Captain America's Weird Tales* (Oct. 1949). He appeared in the lead story only, fighting the Red Skull. In the next issue, Cap was gone.

He had failed to fulfil the command of natural law: growth. Somewhere along the way, his dignity had tarnished. The glory was gone. Captain America became an artifact of an era past.

Cap died late in 1949, officially signaling the twilight of the hero. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* No one noticed, no one mourned.

We were growing up. ■

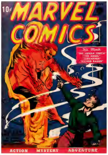

Bill Everett

"O Cicero, I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen the ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam, to be exalted with the threatening clouds: but never till to-night, never till now, did I go through a tempest dropping fire. Either there is a civil strife in heaven, or else the world, too saucy with the gods, incenses them to send destruction.

"A common slave–you know him well by sight–held up his left hand, which did flame and burn like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand, not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd. Besides–I ha' not since put up my sword–against the Capitol I met a lion, who glared upon me, and went surly by without annoying me: and there were drawn upon a heap a hundred ghastly women, transformed with their fear, who swore they saw men all in fire walk up and down the streets."

Thus did William Shakespeare open Act I, Scene III of *Julius Caesar.* Over 300 years later, that scene would inspire the origin of the most incendiary and explosive character ever to appear in the history of comics.

THE HUMAN TORCH!



Copyright © 1939 Marvel Comics Group

Comic readers were startled as he melted his way through a steel vault door like a blazing fireball on the cover of *Marvel Comics* 1 in November of 1939. The lead story, 16 pages in length, each with 9 to 10 panels, told of Professor Horton's revelation:

"Gentlemen of the press, I called you here to my laboratory because I have a difficult problem in my latest discovery...as you all know, I've been working on a synthetic man, an exact replica of a human being!" He exhibited a giant beaker; inside a figure stood motionless.

"In this air-tight glass case lives my creation...I call him The Human Torch!" Horton said as he released air into the chamber. Instantly the figure became an inferno. One of the newshawks uttered comics first *"Good Lord!"* They demanded that he destroy the android before a tragedy occur.

But Horton, like most fictional men of science, could not bring himself to destroy what he had created. Instead he sealed the "fire-man" in a steel tube and entombed that in a block of concrete. The Torch's career might have ended there if not for a convenient crack in the concrete which allowed a tiny seepage of oxygen to cause the human fireball to explode in a seething paroxysm of flame and escape his prison.

Pathetic and confused, he ran through the streets setting anything he approached ablaze. His first words: *"I'm burning alive! Why must everything I touch turn to flame?"* To prevent any further destruction, the Torch dived into a swimming pool to quench his uncontrollable flame.

Next, the Torch was befriended by an ambitious crook named Sardo who tricked him into becoming an accomplice in an arson extortion racket. Somehow a built-in moral instinct took over, and the Torch realized he had been used for a criminal purpose. He enacted a fiery retribution against the hoods and in so doing discovered that by using nitrogen he could control his flame and, in essence, fly. *"The blue and red flames made the Human Torch lighter than air,"* a caption explained simply.

The Torch explained everything to the Police and was released into Horton's custody. The Professor had new plans for his creation, *"If he has complete control, I can make a fortune through him!"* The Torch, enraged by the suggestion, declined to be exploited again, burned a hole in the ceiling and flew away like a comet to close the first tale.

In the following issue (which became *Marvel Mystery Comics*), it was revealed the Torch had inadvertently killed Horton in his fiery farewell. Ensuing developments cause the Torch to be held in jail where he learns that he has been framed by another gang of criminals. He escapes to capture them at a race track, the scene of their next crime.

During the conflict, the incendiary android accidentally set fire to the stands. He issued a *"long, weird yell"* causing the smoke and flames to instantly die out. *"Those flames know their master's voice!"* He smiled confidently. In the next few issues he learned to hurl fireballs, sculpt sheets of fire and command any kind of flame.

For awhile he wore street clothes and assumed the mild-mannered secret identity of Jim Hammond, much like Superman did with Kent. But the Torch was too impulsive, his stories and his nature too combustible to be restrained by a binding alter ego. As the most elemental and most sensational comic character ever created, he was compelled to be the Torch ALL the time. The original concept of the character as a non-human was forgotten. For all practical purposes he had become THE HUMAN TORCH.

The Torch's early costume was blue; issue 6 was the first to reveal his standard red outfit. In the fall of 1940, The Human Torch got his own book and a young sidekick. TORO had become a fire-eater in the circus after a train wreck killed his parents. Though the strip failed to give an explanation, the youth had somehow been endowed with an immunity to fire. The Torch adopted him, taught him to flame on and fly and gave him billing as Toro, The Flaming Kid, next to his own banner headline.

The old adage about "Where there's smoke there's fire" proved itself to be true. The Torch became such a hot property that he was allowed to scorch the pages of 7 other Timely titles that included *Captain America, All Winners, All Select, Mystic, Daring, Sub-Mariner, Young Allies* and his own book. He blazed his way across hundreds of covers, melting diabolic death-ray devices, searing hooded Nazi hordes, turning malefic invasion machinery into molten slag. As an original comic book character, few would ever top him.

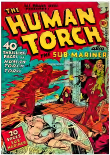
In one form or another, in name, in appearance or in deed, a heat wave of fiery imitations attempted to thaw the frost of reader popularity. Only Fox's THE FLAME (July 1939) preceeded the Torch. His claim to fame was a flame

SUPER DOUBLE FEATURE

gun. Afterward there was AJAX THE SUN MAN, FEARLESS FLINT, FIERY MASK, FIRE EATER, FIREBALL, FIREBRAND, FIREHAIR, FIREFLY, FIREMAN, INFERNO THE FLAME BREATHER, PYROMAN and WILDFIRE.

The man responsible for the inflammable fury was Carl Burgos. Born in New York in 1917, his childhood was little different than most others except for his natural artistic talent and unruly imagination. In his early teens he enrolled in the National Academy of Design. *"I quit after one year because I couldn't learn enough,"* Burgos says.

At 17, he took a job with the Franklin Engraving Company which just happened to be the firm that engraved the plates for a line of comic books produced by Harry A. Chesler. For the first time, Burgos was exposed to stacks of original comic art. Whenever possible, he took the time to study the artist's techniques, their pen styles and brush strokes. He discovered he could draw as well as some and better than a few who already worked in the comics. He formulated an idea about becoming a comic artist. What could he lose?

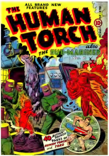


Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

The following week he began at Chesler's studio. At first he apprenticed by doing backgrounds, panel borders and inking the work of others. Then came his first strip, ROCKY DAWSON. Here Burgos had the opportunity to meet other artists who filled him in on the intricacies of storytelling. Soon afterward he left to work at Centaur Comics for John Harley Publications. There he met Lloyd Jacquet and another young artist by the name of Bill Everett. Burgos drew THE IRON SKULL, his first android crime-crusher.

After a year, the trio decided to branch out on their own and became the nucleus of Funnies, Inc., an art shop that produced comic books on assignment. Jacquet, who was already in his mid-40's, became managing editor of the outfit. John Mahon, his partner, acted as business manager; Jim Fitzsimmons was the treasurer.

Staffers included Paul Gustavson, Ben Thompson, Ray Gill, Harry Sahle (who gave Gil Kane his first job on a teen-age strip called CANDY), Mike Roy, Harry Campbell, Sam Gilman, Dolores Carrol, Harry Fisk, Bob Davis, George Mandel and Bob Wood. Grace Everett, Bill's mother, worked as a letterer for the group.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Gilman was a constant source of amusement to the rest of the crew because of the unusual positions he would assume while pencilling his pages. He would often be found drawing standing up, laying down, even kneeling on his chair, but hardly ever sitting.

But the key man of the whole operation was Frank Torpey, a contact man who knew all the publishers and went out to find the group some work.

His first sale was to Martin Goodman who had, up to this point, published pulps, movie books, romance mags and men's slicks. Torpey sold Goodman on the idea of producing a comic book. It was to be called *Marvel Comics,* after Goodman's S-F pulp *Marvel Stories.* Torpey went back to the shop to tell the crew to begin working on their first package deal.

Everybody who wasn't busy on outside assignments created a new character for the book. Burgos wrote, drew and inked the Human Torch. *"We just called them characters,"* Burgos revealed, *"The word super-hero didn't exist until much later. When we created them, we never knew which characters would catch on. We just did the best we could."*

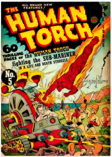
A few weeks later they submitted the package to Goodman who decided to feature the Torch as the lead story and on the cover. He had already commissioned one of his own artists to do a cover based on the Torch character. The final product depicted quite a different Torch than the one inside. He was more like a man on fire than a flame being. The difference didn't seem to matter. The book was a success.

Goodman called his comic book operation Timely Publications and issued a score of titles like *Red Raven, Kid Komics, USA Comics, Young Allies, Mystic, Amazing, Complete Comics, All-Winners, All-Select* and *Daring Mystery.* All Timely's books reflected their pulp lineage in content and concept.

The Human Torch was Timely's initial success and one of the all-time top sellers throughout the golden age. Quite a feat considering the quality of the art which ran from less-than-adequate to just plain poor. Burgos, unlike most other comic artists, refused to swipe his material. Like the Torch, he was a headstrong individualist who insisted, *"I enjoyed everybody's strips, but if they wanted Raymond or Caniff, they could look at Raymond or Caniff. The miserable drawing was all mine, but I was having fun."*

The Torch is, of course, the purest and most exclusive manifestation of the comic hero. Like a blazing archangel, he seems to embody almost theological overtones; his essence being one of god-like omnipotence. The Torch, more than any of his brotherhood, represented the aspect of fury and passion in the comics. Where Superman uprooted or broke up objects, The Torch used his very body to melt them and his flame to purify the presence of evil. The Torch's power was more visual, more awesome than any other. The concept around which he was created was as brilliant as the Torch's flame.

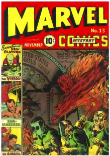
In February 1940, Burgos created a third non-human strip, THE WHITE STREAK, for *Target Comics.* He traveled through the sky on a flame ladder. Burgos continued on the Torch and other strips until he went into the service in 1942. *"I started in the Air Force, took infantry ranger training, went overseas as a rifleman, was transferred to the Signal Corps and came back in the engineers. It sounds crazy but it could only happen to a comic book man."*


ALL BRAND NEW FEATURES!
THE HUMAN TORCH
10¢
60 THRILLING PAGES of the HUMAN TORCH
the SUB-MARINER fighting IN A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE
No. 5

Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Back from the war, Burgos briefly returned to Timely and the Torch, then attended City College to study advertising which, from that point on, became his chosen profession. Others like Alex Schomberg, Al Gabriele, Syd Shores, Carl Pfeufer, Harry Sahle, Don Rico, Mike Sekowsky and Carmine Infantino had taken over the Human Torch tales. John Compton, George Kapitan and Otto Binder were among his writers.

Throughout the 40's the Torch continued to blaze a fiery swath through a denomination of demons like the Parrot, The Crime King, Statues Of Doom, The Photo Phantom, The Underground Demons, The Masked Fiend, The Nazi Vultures, Mr. Grim, The Terrorist Of Time, Masked Horror, Killers Incorporated, The Devil's Mutineers, The Wolf of Gotham, The Laughing Sneak Thief, The Ventriloquist, The Crimson Terror, Master of Murder, The Purple Ghost and his Reign of Terror, The Sons of Evil, The Devil's Double, The Werewolf Horror, The Ghost Of Shadow Manor, The Asbestos Lady, The Hyena and The Walking Corpse.



Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

In June 1949 *Marvel Mystery* folded. The Torch, it seemed, had finally burned out his flame. Three months earlier his own book had gone up in smoke. But he wasn't finished. He would return again in the 50's and 60's to prove conclusively his position as one of comics most unforgettable heroes.

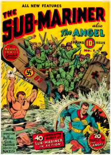
The Torch wasn't the only strip that made the first issue of *Marvel Comics* a historical milestone. Its 64 pages also featured the aquatic adventures of comics underwater monarch...Prince Namor, THE SUB-MARINER.

The Sub-Mariner was the comic book version of *Madame Butterfly.* The tale began in the undersea kingdom beneath Antarctica as its occupants rallied to converge on the American fleet that was inadvertantly destroying their realm by dynamiting icebergs on the surface. Princess Fen was sent to seduce Naval Commander McKenzie in preparation for the invasion by the underwater people. Instead she fell in love with the naval officer, and as a result the sub-Antarctic army was destroyed.

Angered by McKenzie's action and her own humiliation, Princess Fen leaped overboard and returned to her people where she gave birth to Namor. When he grew to manhood, his mother gave his council. *"And so, my son, it has* *taken us twenty years to build up a race to avenge the brutal harm done us then. Now, since you are the only one of us left who can live on land and water, and who can also fly in the air, and because you have the strength of a thousand earthmen, it is your duty to lead us into battle!"*

The avenging son vowed he would never rest until he wiped the surface men from the face of the Earth, setting the tone and the theme for all his stories to come. Built on a foundation of mythology, the Sub-Mariner saga was one of epic scope and deeds. The theme of vengeance ran through each story, uniting them into a legendary narrative of power and permanence in the comic chronology.

In a glorious state of eternal adolescence, Namor hated everybody. He developed the art of oratory to a degree that would do any politician proud. With a noble swagger, a diamond-shaped head and whip-like eyebrows, the Sub-Mariner was the comics first anti-hero.



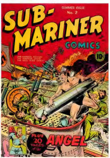
Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

He outperformed his rivals, The Torch and Captain America, by appearing in 8 titles that included his own book which ran from Spring 1941 to June 1949 for a total of 32 issues. Other appearances were in *Captain America, All-Winners, All Select, Kid Komics, Daring, Blonde Phantom* and *Namora.* The Sub-Mariner challenged both Captain America and The Torch on the sales charts and remained in the spotlight longer than almost every other golden age hero.

His tales were drenched with menace as he battled The Periscope Peril, The Floating Fortress, Octopus Of The Pacific, The Mysterious Dr. Suki, Blackbeard, The Dead Who Swim, The Fog Of Living Death, Pirates Of Doom, The Flying Dutchman, Ghost Of Sea Island, Waterfront Phantom, The Shark, The Harbor Of Madmen, The Ghost Ship, Firebrand, Scourge Of The Pacific, The Sea Wolf and The World Destroyers.

The Sub-Mariner's most spectacular conflicts however were with The Human Torch. Their landmark clash began in issues 8, 9 and 10 of *Marvel Msytery* and continued through book-length onslaughts in issues 5, 8 and 10 of *Human Torch.* These titanic assaults have since become classics in the comic Hall of Fame.

The Sub-Mariner was the *magnum opus* of a tall handsome comic artist by the name of William Blake Everett. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on May 18, 1917, Everett spent his early life in Arizona only to return to the East after graduating from high school to enroll in the Vesper George School of Art. Everett stayed for the 1934-35 term.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

His early influences were Mead Schaffer, Dean Cornwall and, most of all, Floyd Davis–all artists for slick magazines like *Colliers* and the *Post.*

"My first job out of school was with the Boston Herald-Traveler, on the Retail Advertising art staff–at an overwhelming salary of $12 per week. I quit that job when they put me on the night shift and went to work as a draftsman for The Brooks System, civil engineers in Newton, Mass. I got fired because I refused to chauffeur one of the partners, whose rancid cigar smoke made me ill.

"From there I went to Phoenix, Arizona, and on to L.A., jobhunting, but with no success. Finally I returned to New York and got a job on the Herald Tribune, once again doing retail advertising art work. That job led to another, as Art Editor for Radio News magazine, Teck Publications, Inc. Teck eventually sold out to Ziff-Davis, and I went to Chicago to become Assistant Art Director to Herm Bollin. Unfortunately, Herm and I didn't get along.

"I had been drawing since the time I could hold a pencil and had made up my mind I was going to be on top by the time I was 21. At 19, I couldn't take the success. I was too cocky and couldn't hold the job. I was fired.

"Then I came back to New York. As hard as I tried, I couldn't get another job as an art director, and I wouldn't take anything less. I went broke!"

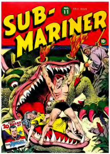
Then, just by chance, Everett happened to run into Walter Holze, one of his old co-workers at Teck. *"Walt said he was with a new company, doing a new type of work...something called comic books. He asked me if I could do comics. I said, 'Sure!!' At that point I was starving. I wasn't interested in the comic business, I was talked into it.*

"The next week I was working for John Harley on Centaur Comics. I sold my first page for $2 – writing, pencilling, inking and all. SKYROCKET STEELE *was my first strip. In no time at all I was getting up to $10 a page. When I was boosted from $10 to $14, I thought I was rich."*

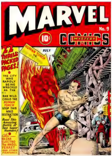
Then Bill created AMAZING MAN and drew the first 5 issues in addition to DIRK THE DEMON. One of Bill's biggest fans at that time was a youngster named Jack Lemmon who would grow up to do his own strip, Bash Brannigan, in a film entitled *How To Murder Your Wife.*

"When Lloyd split with John he offered me and a fellow by the name of Nax Neill a chance to go in with him and two other guys, John Mahon and Frank Torpey, on a fifty-fifty basis. We took a small loft office on 45th Street. The idea was to become publishers. But we didn't have the money or credit to publish our own books so we became an art service. We'd put the whole book together, deliver the package to the publisher and get paid for it."

It was at this point that Everett created the Sub-Mariner. Martin Goodman had contracted for a book. *"We were asked to develop all new characters. Carl and I were quite close friends, and we usually held our story conferences very informally over a drink. We were discussing the new book in the Webster Bar and between us, whether it was his idea or mine or a combination of both, we decided on using the two elements, fire and water. We did that because everything else was being used at the time. It happened to be a lucky guess. We talked about what we could do with them and if I'm not mistaken, the idea of a character turning himself into flame came first. Carl called him the Human Torch.*



Copyright © 1943 Marvel Comics Group


MARVEL
No. 9
10¢
MYSTERY
COMICS
JULY
HUMAN TORCH VS.
22 THRILL-PACKED PAGES!
THE CITY WAS RAPIDLY BEING WRECKED AS THE
RAN WILD. COULD THE HUMAN TORCH STOP THIS MAD DESTRUCTION?
Read This Amazing Battle of Two Super Humans!
Also KA-ZAR ELECTRO The ANGEL FERRET AND OTHER FEATURES

Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

"Then we discussed the natural opposite of fire...water. What could we do with a character and water? That was my part of it. I recalled these lines from the Rime of The Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

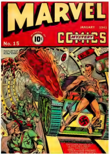
> *The sun came up upon the left,*
> *Out of the sea came he!*
> *And he shone bright, and on the right*
> *Went down into the sea.*

"I called him the Sub-Mariner after the poem and for the name Namor, I simply spelled "Roman" backwards. I had been reading Jack London and the deep-sea novels by James Conelly and was quite conversant with the lore of the sea. In those days, we didn't have writers unless we wanted to hire them ourselves. Almost everybody created their own features and both wrote and drew them. I was no different. I began thinking about the Sub-Mariner and his icy Kingdom under Antarctica. The wings on his feet were inspired by the statue of Mercury. The concept of the Sub-Mariner came naturally to me, just like it was something that had to be told."

Everett's first Sub-Mariner story was his best up to that time. He drew it on double-tone board for special shading effects. Unfortunately, the colorist at the engravers didn't know how to handle it and colored the job poorly. Even Everett wasn't sure how it should have been done. As it happened, Namor's flesh was blue and green in the underwater sequences.

Everett fictionalized a version about his inspiration for the Sub-Mariner in a text feature in the first issue of the *Human Torch.* He related a yarn about a non-existant voyage he had taken as a seaman. *"On one run, when we were still a day out of Florida, one of those native Floridian hurricanes hit us broadside. It shook that old tub like it was a toy. I happened to be at the wheel, and the full force of the storm spun it like a top. One of the bigger men took over for the minute, for there was another job to be done. The wireless antenna* *had been blown down, and it meant a climb up the slippery rope stays to the top of the mast. I was elected.*

"I climbed into my oilskins and started up. The wind cut my face and hands, and I had all I could do to hold on. The rigging was wet and slippery. My job was to carry that loose wire up and tie it back to the mast. Well, I finally reached the top, and stood upright on the crosstrees. The wind lashed my oils and they cracked like thunder. Suddenly, after I had done my job, I felt myself being swept off my perch into thin air! I grabbed, and luckily caught the end of a rope. I swung there, half dazed for a moment, only to realize that my hand was slowly slipping off the wet hemp. Below I could see the washed deck glaring up at me. The cold wind numbed my spirit, and a strange feeling came over me, I felt I was not alone. Something seemed to take hold of me and lift me, bodily, back onto the crosstrees. I lay there for a moment, and when I finally got a grip on myself, I looked up to see who, or what, had helped me. THERE WAS NO ONE THERE!"

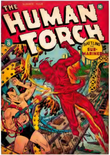


Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Everett implied that the supernatural forces in the sea as recounted in Coleridge's narrative epic had aided him. Thus, the idea for the character. He recalls, *"It was all in fun. I wrote the story, and it seemed like an interesting idea at the time."*

Like Superman, the Torch and other comic heroes of that era, the Sub-Mariner survived because of his originality not because of his art. Everett's Namor was a few notches above Burgos' Torch but a long way from the anatomical precision of Raymond or the stylishness of Caniff. Everett, like Burgos, refused to copy the work of others.

"I didn't want to swipe from anybody; it had to come from me. It wasn't the best but it was all Everett. Storytelling was my strong point." Everett's work, like Shuster's and Kirby's, made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in accuracy. Many of the most successful comic artists couldn't have worked in a slick style if they wanted to. They were primitives whose work reflected the talents of men dedicated to the characters they confronted on their drawing boards. A comparison between those early products and most of today's books will prove out their high-spirited vitality.



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Everett recalled the Sub-Mariner/Torch team-ups. *"That was an idea that Carl and I dreamed up. We considered the fact that the two characters and their opposing elements had separate stories and wondered what could happen if we got them together as rivals to fight each other."*

Jacquet mentioned it to Goodman who thought it over and decided he wanted the book immediately. OVER THE WEEKEND! *"All we knew is that the Torch and Namor had to have a fight,"* Bill remembers. They began assembling their forces immediately for an assault on Goodman's deadline. The word went out: anybody available over the Friday-Saturday-Sunday interval was invited to pitch in on anything from pencil sharpening to erasing pages.

It was decided that Everett's apartment on 33rd Street would be the scene of the crime. A couple of cases of beer were ordered and a few stacks of sandwiches. They began to work.

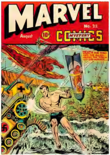
Carl and Bill sat down at the drawing boards and composed the first two pages without having the slightest notion about story line. John Compton came in and began to plot out a script. Then Jack Darcy from Hillman Publications showed up, found a corner and began to work. Mike Roy and Harry Sahle followed and started doing breakdowns and backgrounds. George Kapitan and Harry Chapman dropped in next to lend their writing talents. Then Joey Piazza who, being unable to find a place to work, set up his writing quarters in the bathtub.

Breakdowns were pencilled as soon as page by page synopses' were completed. Finished dialogue was written directly on the pages, then lettered. They all teamed up to produce the story a page at a time, making it up as they went along. Reams of paper littered the floor. Bottles collected in corners. Everybody was yelling their own ideas to the rest. Artists and writers slept in shifts. More then a dozen showed up over the weekend. The radio and record player were going full blast. Neighbors complained and called the cops. The telephone never stopped ringing. It was the comic industry's version of *Duck Soup*.

But they got the job done. The book was a complete sell-out.

"The era of the ten cent comic book was a romantic and adventuresome one," Everett explains. *"Of such incidents was the early comic industry made. Carl and I worked on the team-ups together. I'd draw my character, he'd draw his and, like them, we'd argue constantly because we wanted to. Carl was serious about his work, perhaps more than I. He enjoyed the comics more than I did, and he was certainly a lot better on deadlines. I don't remember that Carl missed too many. I don't remember that I made any."*

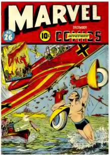
As art director of Funnies, Inc., Everett checked out every strip that went through the shop and handled a batch of other strips besides, like THE CHAMELEON and BULLS-EYE BILL for Novelty Press, and MUSIC MASTER, PHANTASMO and MAN O'METAL for Eastern Color. He drew a batch of covers, occasionally signing them with his middle name Blake. The Sub-Mariner had become such a success that Steve Douglas, editor of Eastern Color's *Famous Funnies*, asked Bill to create an imitation of him for their books.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Everett produced the HYDROMAN whose alter ego was Bob Blake (after his brother Bob and his own middle name). Blake had been accidentally drenched by a chemical solution that converted his flesh and blood into water. He disintegrated into a pool of liquid. But an antidote administered by his scientist friend Harry Thurston (after a friend of Everett's) brought him back to human form again. Then Blake discovered he could change from one to the other merely by willing it so and became the crime-crushing Hydroman. He traveled through sewers, fire hydrants and kitchen sinks and sported a costume of Translite which was impenetrable even by bullets. He lasted 29 issues in *Heroic Comics*.

Everett established his record as comics underwater king by creating a third water wonder. When Lt. Peter Noble of the U. S. Navy survived a submarine disaster, he discovered he had the ability to breathe underwater as well as on the surface. He established himself as the leader in a lair of undersea creatures, fashioned a costume and called himself THE FIN (*"because he wore one on his head–of all places!"* remarks Everett). He discovered a mystic cutlass in a galley ship which could cut through any metal and gave him the strength of 20 men. The Fin appeared in *Daring* 7, disappeared in *Daring* 8 and did a walk on in *Comedy* 9.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

In 1941 Goodman dropped his contract with Funnies, Inc. and decided to set up his own comic staff with his younger brother Arthur Goodman in charge. *"Both Arthur and Stan Lee were just kids then and gave us considerable trouble. I guess we were all feeling our oats at that time. We gave them trouble too."* Rob Soloman, Al Sulman and Al Fago were among others at the helm of Timely Comics in the 40's.

Jacquet, Mahon and Fitzsimmons were beginning to generate friction among themselves and their staff. Mahon left, then Torpey took a job with Timely. More men were beginning to get their draft notices. Everett was doing a Sub-Mariner page when the war was officially announced. He went into the service in February of 1942.

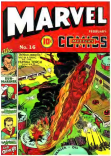
"I married while in the army–a girl named Gwenn Randall, from Nebraska, who was working for the Ordinance Dept. in the Pentagon. I met her in '42 when I was attending Officer Candidate School at Fort Belvior, and married her when I returned from the European Theater in '44. Our first child, a daughter, was born just before I was shipped out to the Pacific. I was in the Philippines when the war terminated and returned home in February '46.

"I'd come into a little money when my great-uncle died during the war, so I

sort of loafed around for a while after I got home, travelling around a bit and finally settling in my wife's home town, Fairbury, Nebraska. This was when I renewed my association with Martin Goodman, working by mail on a free-lance basis, picking up the Sub-Mariner where I'd left off four years ago."

In addition to his regular book, Bill began to write and draw for the VENUS and NAMORA series. The former ran 19 issues in her own book from August 1948 to April 1952. The latter was Stan Lee's female version of Namor (his cousin by blood) and appeared primarily in *Marvel Mystery* and *Sub-Mariner* plus 3 issues of her own book. Lee had also incorporated the Atlantis legend into the Sub-Mariner saga. As the golden age of comics began to fade, Everett turned his attention to the horror field and produced hundreds of thrillers while working on Timely's staff in addition to his humor work in satirical mags like *Loco*, *Cracked* and *Snafu*. Rates had risen to $28 for a complete pencilled and inked page. Scripts were $7.50 per.

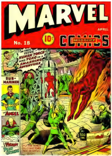
Then in the mid-50's, Goodman sold his distributing company and went with American News. The new arrangement proved disastrous. *"The whole bunch of us were thrown out on our respective ears, and that was when I decided I'd better find another outlet for whatever talent I might have. I was most fortunate in landing a job with Norcross, specializing in humorous and 'Studio' cards. Within a year, I had become Planning Director and was pretty well situated when I heard about an opening with Rust Craft Publishers in Dedham, Massachusetts."*



Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

Everett would continue in advertising for the next half dozen years until the renaissance of the super-hero in the 60's would once again lure him back into the fold. Everett's contribution to the history of comics has been massive, imaginative and original; his reputation assured in an art form he helped create.

Ray Gill was another important figure at Funnies, Inc. He had joined the group as a writer and found himself to be the editor of 11 titles by the time he was 21. He handled the complete Curtis line of comics which included *Blue Bolt*, *Target* and *Foremost* in addition to creating and scripting a half dozen Timely strips. Gill wrote text fillers in all the Timely books under a host of pen names. The knack must be in the family blood because his brother Joe is currently a comic writer for Charlton and National Publications.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Another editor in the shop has since gone on to slightly bigger and better things, although most of them are still closely related to his early comic work. As an editor he was required not only to control the concept and quality of the material that was done at Funnies, Inc. but also to plot and often write scripts and text fillers whenever the occasion warranted it. He filled in on everything from the humorous Night Life of The Fleas to Edison Bell, Boy Inventor to the Human Torch. That editor was Mickey Spillane.

Spillane was an extremely graphic writer as time would later prove. He wrote for the artist with explicit clarity. Each Spillane paragraph was the equivalent of a comic page. Each sentence told precisely enough for the artist to draw just the right panel. This laconic and punchy delivery was the backbone of Spillane's later writing style.

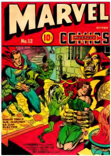
His comic career was interrupted briefly by an overseas tour with Uncle Sam. When he returned from the service in 1945, his first thought...perhaps his second thought, was to get back into the comic business. Only this time as a publisher!

He hailed a few of his old co-workers including Ray Gill and Basil Wolverton and outlined this idea: they would all produce the comics and all share in the profits. The plan sounded good, and they began to work on the first book, Spillane included. He conceived a character in the feet-on-the-desk tradition of Sam Spade—only tougher, much tougher. He called his private eye Mike Danger. Timely alumnus Mike Roy got the job of putting it into panels. In a few weeks, the book was completed.

One of the most vital factors in a successful publication is distribution. Without good coverage even the best book will fold. Spillane approached the distributors and got the same answer everywhere. NO! The newstands were already flooded with comics. Distributors refused to accept any more, especially from a maverick outfit.

Spillane expanded his private cop tale into narrative form. By the time he was finished, he had written a novel. But no one was buying. He gave the book to Ray Gill to read. Gill gave it to a friend of his in the publishing business, Jack McKenna. McKenna gave it to his wife. She said it was dynamite. The book made literary history, became an all-time best seller and started a publishing revolution. Spillane had changed Mike Danger's name to Mike Hammer. The book was *I, The Jury*.

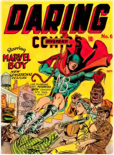
Paul Gustavson's THE ANGEL was another strip that premiered in *Marvel Comics* 1. He appeared without the usual origin story and was known as the Angel in both his costume of blue and yellow with accompanying red cloak or in a plain blue business suit. The Angel was one of the few costume heroes to sport a moustache. Many of his tales dwelled in the realm of the weird with titles like *Horror Of The Haunted Cathedral*, *The Wolfman Terror*, *The Weird Ghost Of Amber Swamp*, *The Case Of Professor Torture*, *The Banquet Of Blood* and *The Tangled Web Of Death*. Though his only apparent power was to cast a shadow of an angel after he left the scene, The Angel maintained a 79 issue run in *Marvel Mystery* with 21 additional stories in *Sub-Mariner*.



Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

KA-ZAR the jungle lord, based on the pulp character created by Bob Byrd, was also featured in the first issue of *Marvel Comics*. Drawn by Ben Thompson, Ka-Zar and his saber-tooth tiger Zar, were not only imitations of Burroughs' Tarzan but of Foster's Tarzan as well. He lasted 27 issues.

THE MASKED RAIDER and JUNGLE TERROR filled out the remaining pages of Timely's first comic book. As it turned out, all the remaining Timely heroes were only fillers for the super-popular Captain America/Torch/Sub-Mariner trio. Dozens of characters



Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

shuffled back and forth from book to book, many appearing only a few times, some of them only once.

Daring Mystery was one of Timely's most interesting titles. It took 6 years to publish a total of 12 issues. Each book (they could have been called Confusing Mystery) literally featured an entirely different line-up of characters. Most of them shouted their pulp heritage:

Issue 1 - FIERY MASK, JOHN STEELE, Soldier of Fortune, TEXAS KID, MONAKO, Prince of Magic, FIASH FOSTER, PHANTOM OF THE UNDERWORLD AND BARNEY MULLEN, Sea Rover.

Issue 2 - ZEPHYR JONES and his Rocket Ship, THE PHANTOM BULLET, TROJAK THE TIGERMAN, K-4 AND HIS SKY DEVILS, MR. E and THE LAUGHING MASK.

Issue 3 - DALE OF FBI, BREEZE BARTON, THE PURPLE MASK, PHANTOM REPORTER, TROJAK, MARVEX the Super Robot and CAPTAIN STRONG.

Issue 4 - PURPLE MASK, K-4, MONAKO, WHIRLWIND CARTER Of The Interplanetary Secret Service, MARVEX, G-MAN DON GORMAN, BREEZE BARTON and TROJAK.

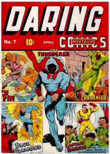
Issue 5 - FIERY MASK, TROJAK, K-4, MONAKO, MARVEX, WHIRLWIND CARTER, BREEZE BARTON, LITTLE HERCULES and THE FALCON.

Issue 6 - MARVEL BOY, FIERY MASK, STUPORMAN, FLYING FLAME, FALCON, MONAKO, DYNAMAN and TIGER MAN.

Issue 7 - THE THUNDERER, THE FIN, THE BLUE DIAMOND, SILVER SCORPION, MR. MILLION, CAPTAIN DARING and THE CHALLENGER.

Issue 8 - CITIZEN V, THE FIN, THE THUNDERER, RUDY THE ROBOT, SILVER SCORPION, CAPTAIN DARING and THE BLUE DIAMOND.

The first 8 issues of *Daring* explored almost every improbable facet of superheroism yet Timely failed to score with any of them. One can almost imagine Martin Goodman throwing up his hands in surrender. The remaining 4 issues featured sure-fire tales of the Torch and



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Namor.

The reason this try-out book failed was simple: though the characters therein were interesting, different and often sensational, they just weren't different enough. And compared to Timely's titanic trio, they were positively pale.

Take THE THUNDERER for example, concocted by the Torch's team, Carl Burgos and John Compton. He was ham radio operator Jerry Carstairs, who flung a microphone and speaker outfit around his neck, put on a red costume with a hood, a black mask and a blue cape and called himself the Thunderer. He yelled a lot and turned up later as THE BLACK AVENGER.

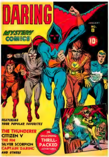
On an Antarctic expedition, Professor Elton Morrow finds a gigantic blue diamond. During the return trip to the States, a Nazi U-boat sinks their ship and causes slivers of the huge gem to penetrate Morrow's brain. Later, when he saves a child's life and gets hit by a truck he states, *"Why...I hardly felt that! And I feel solid as a granite cliff!"* He climbed into a blue and yellow costume and became THE BLUE DIAMOND. He was Ben Thompson's brainchild.

Betty Barstow was on her way to a masquerade party one night garbed in yellow and red tights and a mask. She stumbles across a nest of thugs, floors them with a ju-jitsu and decides to become THE SILVER SCORPION. Harry Sahle, who drew the strip, never did get her to the party.

CAPTAIN DARING, written and drawn by Jack Kirby, told of an invasion of the surface world by an underground army replete with fantastic architecture and machinery. The tale embodied a host of death-rays, space ships, armored men and incredible creatures.

When his father is killed by the underworld, a nameless son travels around the world learning to use every weapon imaginable like an expert. In one of the weakest stories ever told, he decides to don a green costume and become the master of 1000 weapons, THE CHALLENGER. Mike Sekowsky and George Kline did the honors.

MARVEL BOY was another Kirby strip. As Martin Burns was born, his body was possessed by the soul of Hercules. In his adolescence, an eerie shadow gifts him with a red and blue costume and explains he has the power of 30 men. An interesting sidelight is that one of the drawn figures in this strip served as the model for the late 40's version of Superman. THE FIERY MASK was a Simon and Kirby feature written by George Kapitan. He was red-headed Dr. Jack Castle who wore the red mask to combat supernatural menace.



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Harry Douglas' STUPORMAN was a parody strip, quite off the beaten path of Timely's usual psuedo-serious stuff. Stuporman was billed as "the man of the day after tomorrow" who sometimes flew backwards (with the aid of a mirror) to keep dust from getting into his eyes. Pretty funny stuff.

THE FALCON was another long underwear strip a shade better written and drawn than most. The interesting element about this character is that the artist always pasted-up the figure of the bird on the hero's chest instead of redrawing it in each panel. He also took the trouble to make the costume a true gray by applying a mechanical process tone to the figure.

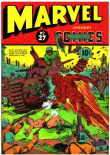
MONAKO by Larry Antonette was another version of Mandrake with a red fez. Klaus Nordling's THIN MAN was Timely's one-shot imitation of Plastic Man. Steve Dahlman's DYNAMAN escaped from a sunken isle that housed an advanced civilization. He lasted one story. Ben Thompson's CITIZEN V invented the popular V for victory hand signal in the comics. He painted V's on everything to drive the Fuehrer crazy.

USA was another Timely title that housed a coalition of new heroes. THE DEFENDER was featured on the cover and in the lead slot in the opening issue. He was a weak variation of Captain America in a costume of red, white and blue and came complete with a kid sidekick named Rusty whose outfit was identical to Bucky's. Four stories were all both he and the readers could take.

Al Avison and Al Gabriele scored with the most unbelievable origin of the golden age with a character called THE WHIZZER. The tale began in the African jungles as Dr. Emil Frank watches helplessly as his son dies of fever. As he ponders the situation, a snake slithers toward the prostrate form with tongue aquiver. *"Suddenly, from out of the dense foliage, in a lightning swift leap, a mongoose flies at the hideous snake!"* a caption relates.

After the creature kills the snake, Doc Frank gingerly picks the animal up by the neck with both hands and begins speaking to him, *"You've killed the snake! You've saved my son! You...but you're wounded! There's blood on you...blood...that's it! I'll use your blood! I'll inject the blood of a mongoose into Bob!"* Honest. That's what he said.

Two panels later, the old doctor dies, *"The strain had been too great."* With his dying breath he said to his son, *"You're to be different than other men...!"* Bob takes a swing with his arm. *"Father called me a whizzer–what did he mean? Why–look how fast I am! My arm–it's really whizzing! That's what Dad meant! I've received the mongoose's speed! Dad was right–I'm a whizzer!"*



Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

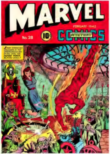
He returns to New York and becomes the Whizzer by adopting a nicely designed costume of yellow and blue. The art had a conscientious approach to the rendering but the story line and dialogue was positively humiliating. The Whizzer was Timely's version of the Flash. He appeared in a half dozen titles and lasted until the end of 1947. It was simply so bad, it was good.

MR. LIBERTY by Syd Shores was a rather intriguing strip based on the idea of Paul Revere's ghost returning to aid American History Professor John Liberty to battle fifth columnists. The Professor is visited by a spectral figure, then finds himself garbed in a Revolutionary War type outfit. He is aided by Revere and other spirit soldiers during his 4 issue venture.

THE YOUNG AVENGER was orange and green clad Bill Byron. Given his costume and instructions by an ethereal voice in the night, the young crimefighter starred in a single adventure, well drawn by Mike Roy using the name Michael Robard with Alex Raymond's work as his inspiration.

Another strip with potential enough to become another Torch or Namor ran a mere 4 issues. It began with a somber splash panel visualizing a vast Arctic panorama. The caption read, *"The far North! Challenging! Mysterious! Forbidding! The land that no man really knows...in this great frozen waste, surrounded by an eternal, deathly quiet, lives a person we have all heard of but few men have seen–the king of the cold–* JACK FROST!!"

The tale begins with a fur-clad man crawling across a glacier, calling for help. Suddenly a pale blue and white figure bursts through an ice floe and skids across the frigid surface toward the dying man. The strange figure embraces the man who, with his last breath, tells that he discovered gold in Alaska and was shot by thugs. The icy being stands erect and takes the usual oath. *"Dead! I have heard that crime flourishes throughout the world, but it has now reached my land...I will avenge this deed and prevent more like it!"*



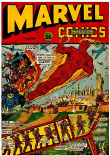
Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

He travels to New York on the *"Wings of the wintry wind"* and visits Police Headquarters where he offers to help them fight crime. When he demonstrates his powers by turning the room into a freezer, they misunderstand and try to capture him, believing him to be a dangerous madman. Frost brings the dead man's killers to justice and saves his beautiful daughter by utilizing his icy breath, using icicles as throwing knives and creating an icy path through a burning building.

The Police try again to take him in, this time as a murderer. Frost disappears, leaving only an icy signature and the promise that if he can't work with them, he'll work against them. *"The next time we meet–BEWARE!"* The story was signed by Stan Lee.

The final character in *USA Comics* featured a hero called USA–Underground Secret Agent–ROCKMAN. The premise made it the book's most offbeat strip. The art and script, done by one of comics authentic originals, Basil Wolverton, was equally offbeat. Wolverton is, in fact, the father of the underground comic style of the 70's which was popularized by artists like Bob Crumb and others.

The strip began with the opening splash panel redrawn in the Kirby style evidently because Wolverton's approach wasn't spectacular enough. The story opens showing Roffler demanding of his building contractor that a tunnel be finished within the week and that complete secrecy be kept by the crew. The tunnel, we discover, leads from the basement of his home and has been dug under the projected site of an airplane factory. Roffler later kills the crew to insure their silence.



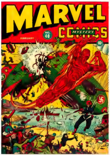
Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

"Little does Roffler know that a man living far beneath the surface of the North American continent has followed his every move, heard his every word! It is Rockman, leader of the inhabitants of Abysmia, a strange, unknown subterranean world deep in the Earth's ancient gas-formed caverns!"

Rockman, dressed in a beautifully designed costume and helmet of tan and red, strikes a triangular gong and summons the Abysmians to a council meeting. He recaps their history by stating they had been forced to seek refuge underground during the ice age and have continued to develop there while the surface world fostered its own civilization. He suggests that, with the possibility of war impending, he go to the surface to *"thwart and punish the evil ones."* His people concur.

Rockman builds a powerful digger car and bores upward. Meanwhile, the airplane factory has been constructed over the secret network of tunnels, and Roffler plots to set powerful charges to blow it up. Rockman surfaces and collapses the tunnel, trapping the enemy agents inside with the bombs. As they begin to dismantle the charges, Rockman appears. *"Just a couple of rats in a trap, eh?"* he says in a gravel voice.

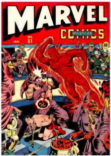
He disarms the foreigners and plows through a wall to flood the tunnel with water. Roffler kills his companion in an effort to escape and is killed himself in the ensuing debris of a cave-in. Minutes later Rockman comes to the surface and has his first view of the outer world. *"If the rest of this surface world is half this beautiful, I can't understand why men are trying to destroy it–and themselves!"*



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

It, too, lasted only 4 issues and was replaced by a Wolverton humor detective strip called DISK-EYES which appeared as a one-shot. ROKO THE AMAZING was another one-story character by Jack Alderman. Young Lon Craig becomes Roko by pronouncing the word "Illium." The strip was so well drawn it hardly fit into the Timely format.

Vince Alascia's AMERICAN AVENGER was the reincarnation of South American patriot El Gaucho. CAPTAIN DARING AND HIS SKY SHARKS was drawn by Alex Schomberg and depicted a group of devil-may-care pilots counter-Nazi plots.



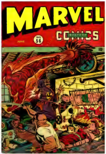
Copyright © 1943 Marvel Comics Group

Other USA features that were included in its 16 issue run were THE VAGABOND, THE DEFENDER, CAPTAIN TERROR, CORPORAL DIX, THE BLUE BLADE, THE FIGHTING HOBO and JAP BUSTER JOHNSON. *Mystic Comics* starred an equally colorful and undistinguished assortment of costumers who, like the rest of their brotherhood, boasted a plurality of implausible origins.

The most interesting of that group was THE BLACK WIDOW written by George Kapitan and drawn by Stan Drake, Mike Sekowsky and Harry Sahle, all imitating Kirby. When Claire Voyant was murdered and went to hell, she became Satan's ambassador. Garbed in a sultry red satin outfit with boots and cape, The Black Widow, with her billowing alabaster hair, was frequently sent back to Earth at her master's bidding to claim yet another soul for the netherworld.

National was innately apprehensive about physical abnormality. Every one of their heroes was an impeccably formed homo sapien varying from the norm in powers and dress only. Even DC's villains tended toward exterior typicality, grotesqueries usually being effected through make-up. Timely, it seemed, had no such qualms. Aberration and phenomenality was their norm. Here super-straight Captain America was the freak.

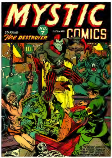
THE TERROR by Don Rico and Syd Shores was the perfect example. The Terror had been the victim of an automobile accident who was injected with the blood of a mad dog. He pulls through the crisis but whenever he comes into close proximity to a crime, he changes into a fearsome entity, Jekyll-Hyde style, and becomes the Terror.



Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

Stan Lee and Bob Hughes teamed to produce THE BLACK MARVEL who passed the ritual tribal test of the Blackfoot Indians to become their chief and a crimefighter at the same time. Bob Davis originated THE BLAZING SKULL in the same issue. He was Mark Todd who donned the red outfit with the crossbones and the skull helmet to battle the Nazi menace.

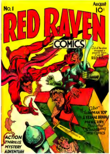
Timely finally found a winner in their midst with issue 6 of *Mystic*. A 15 page tale by Stan Lee and Jack Binder told how American news ace Keen Marlow was imprisoned by the Reich because of his English heritage. One of his fellow prisoners was a dying scientist who had perfected a formula for producing a race of super soldiers ala Captain America. Marlow takes the super liquid, becomes an ultra-powerful being and vows to annihilate the Nazis as the mighty DESTROYER. His costume and look was comparable to the Phantom's and was somehow quite appealing, enough at least to appear in 8 different titles up to the fall of 1946.



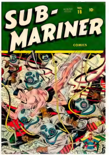
Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Other *Mystic* misfits were FLEXO, The Rubber Man; BLUE BLAZE; DEEP SEA DEMON; DAKOR; The Magician; DYNAMIC MAN; TAXI TAYLOR and His Wonder Cab; EXCELO, The Mastermind; ZARA Of The Jungle; INVISIBLE MAN; HERCULES; MERZAH The Mystic; SUPER SLAVE; SUB-EARTH MAN; THE MOON MAN; THE WITNESS and DAVEY AND THE DEMON.

Timely's most curious and interesting title was *Red Raven Comics* dated August 1940. The hero of the title was one of the few comic characters who, even though he had the name of a bird, sported a pair of batwings. The inscrutable 17 page origin story described a passenger plane caught in the fury of a storm over the Pacific. As it flies through the turbulent clouds, the plane encounters an island floating in the sky. The plane crashes into the island and



Copyright © 1940 Marvel Comics Group

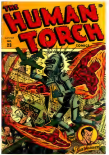


Copyright © 1945 Marvel Comics Group

alarms its inhabitants, a race of winged men descended from birds just as we have evolved from the apes.

The sole survivor of the wreckage is a young red-haired child who is adopted by the king of the birdmen. He matures straight and strong and at the age of 20, he is counciled by the king. *"You are brave as our bravest bird, the Raven! I shall call you the RED RAVEN! With the aid of the wings we made you, you shall go back to your people and devote your life to eradicating the elements that make for unhappiness in the world! This is my wish!"*

Back on Earth, the Raven is approached by super-hood Zeelmo. When he refuses to serve the villain, The Raven falls through a trap door and is plunged into a dungeon below. Zeelmo thoughtfully tosses in a girl to join him. As an "ageing" gas begins to fill the chamber, The Raven's blue business suit vanishes and he sprouts huge pink batwings and a red costume. He lifts the girl and flies upward to the trap door. *"Don't weaken,"* she encourages, *"Remember, life begins at forty!"* He escapes and after another series of encounters brings the crooks to justice.

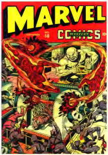


Copyright © 1946 Marvel Comics Group

Dick Briefer's HUMAN TOP explained how Bruce Bravelle was being submitted to a series of experiments that planned to *"nourish the human body with electrical currents instead of food."* Suddenly, the old castle is hit by a bolt of lightning. When Bruce is checked the Professor discovers, *"Strange...the current injected flows to the right of your body and the current injected by the lightning flows to the left! Opposing magnetic forces...Hmmm...!"*

Considering another theory, he has Bruce cross his wrists which causes the young man to spin like a top. You guessed it; he climbs into a red and blue costume and becomes another crimefighter.

Jack Kirby's MERCURY was an 8 pager of very special interest. In it, Kirby once again asserted his preoccupation with mythology into the milieu of contemporary events. The narrative begins on Mount Olumpus, home of the gods, as Jupiter ponders the drama mortals play out. Minerva suggests he appoint someone to oppose their evils and Jupiter selects his own son Mercury.



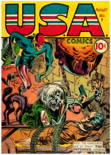
Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

Speeding to Earth, Mercury witnesses a raging holocaust of destruction and death enacted by the machines of war. The scene changes to Prussland and its leader Rudolph Hendler. At that time war was not declared officially and Kirby envisioned the satanic Hendler (or Hitler) as the god of evil, Pluto.

Privately the two confront each other. *"Never in my existence have I played with slaughter on such a grand scale! Look at them! Killing! Maiming! Man is as gullible as ever, cousin! It is only his uniform and weapons that change...!"* Pluto snarls. *"Foul demon! How I wish you were mortal,"* replies the golden-haired Mercury, *"so I could strangle you slowly! I can't kill you but I can fight you, Pluto! I'll show man the way to peace as you did to war!"*

Mercury speeds out across the Atlantic to save an ocean liner from a U-boat while Handler returns to his human form. Afterward, plans are discovered to be missing from the war offices secret file. Thea Shilhausen, a woman espionage agent for the dreaded "Sturm Staffel" conceives an idea to trap the elusive plan snatcher.

"Their quarry arrives in a glaring beam of light and is caught in a vicious crossfire from every angle of the room! The supple, godlike figure walks through the hail of bullets unscathed...the frightened female spy fires frantically at the oncoming man who won't die...!"

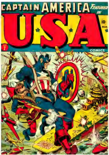

USA
AUGUST
No. 1
COMICS
10¢
WITH THE GENERAL'S LIFE AT STAKE, THE DEFENDER CHARGES

Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Mercury turns, warning, *"Peace is on the march–mere bullets won't stop it!"* The tale closes as it opened, with the gods ever watching this battleground...Earth.

The idea of mythological gods as heroes on Earth is, thematically, one of Kirby's favorites. He had touched on it in Blue Bolt and would later in strips like The Sandman, Kid Adonis, Captain 3-D, Thor and the New Gods.

COMET PIERCE was another feature in that issue which was entirely written, pencilled and inked by Kirby. This time he reached into the future to tell a tale of high fantasy as only he could. *"Time may change civilization, custom and speech, but it can never erase man's craving for adventure and thrills...in 45 B. C. he may have been Caius Marcus, a Roman charioteer, or Cyclone Smith, an auto racer at the Indianapolis dirt track in 1940...but in the year 2150 A. D. his name is Comet Pierce and he mans a flaming metal meteor called a rocket!"*

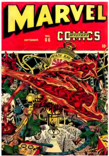


Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Kirby's imagination and raw talent carved a study of sheer vitality about a race to the stars, a cosmic traitor and an alien love, all in the space of a mere 7 pages.

The following story read, *"From the ancient tombs of the Pharaohs in the mysterious excavated deserts of Egypt emerges* MAGAR THE MYSTIC, *re-creator of souls...this man has supernatural powers which enable him to communicate with the dead and re-create the great men and women in history...!"* Clad in a blue cloak and turban he did just that, but always somehow managed to spell their names wrong.

The book's final feature narrated a yarn about a Professor Carmody who was experimenting to replace human organs with mechanical substitutes. Enemy agents kidnap his daughter and shoot him. With his dying breath, he tells his assistant, *"They've killed my body, but not my brain! You must operate on it and put it into the artificial heart as I showed you..."*



Copyright © 1945 Marvel Comics Group

After the operation, Carmody becomes THE ETERNAL BRAIN, speaking and hearing through mechanical devices which also allow him to send and receive telepathic messages. For the remaining 6 pages he guides his assistant through a series of unlikely (even for comic books) adventures until his daughter is rescued.

CAPTAIN WONDER, another Timely version of Captain America, appeared in the first issue of *Kid Komics* in February 1943. Trying to perfect a miracle drug that will multiply a man's strength a dozen times, Professor Jordan is caught in an explosion and overcome by the fumes. His young friend, Tim Mulrooney, comes to his aid and discovers Jordan has become a physical superman. As usual, they decide to become crimefighters in tight red and blue outfits and, as usual, they lasted 2 issues. Otto Binder and Frank Giacoia handled the feature.

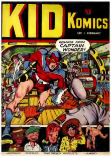
DAREDEVILS 3, RED HAWK, TOMMY TYME and SUBBIE, the kid version of the Sub-Mariner also appeared in *Kid Komics* between the

Young Allies and the Destroyer strips.

Timely's original success, *Marvel Mystery Comics*, spotlighted a number of other notables throughout its 92 issue run. Steve Dahlman's ELECTO, the wonder robot, was a truly bizarre series of science-fiction adventures. He was accompanied by his creator Dr. Simon Crane, Betty Crane and Professor Zog for 15 appearances.

TERRY VANCE the young detective, his monkey Dr. Watson and his newshawk friend Deadline Dawson was another long-run feature. Written by Ray Gill and drawn by Bob Oksner, Vance was Timely's longest running non-super hero strip. THE FERRET, a Saint-like detective, showed up briefly before giving way to more sensational matter.

THE PATRIOT was another Ray Gill feature drawn by Sid Greene among others. Newspaperman Jeff Mace became the red, white and blue clad figure whenever danger threatened. His tales were generally 5 pages long and continued from book to book.

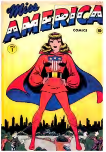

KID KOMICS
10¢ • FEBRUARY
REGARDS FROM CAPTAIN WONDER!
•ANSWERMAN• •KNUCKLES• •TRANE TROUBLE• •PINTO PETE• •SUBBIE•
Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Kirby had another moderate success by combining science with the supernatural. The caption told, *"Science discovers smoke to be the long sought for gateway to the supernatural! Professor Enoch Mason's Dimension Smasher blasted a path into the beyond—and through the breach that once separated the material world from the supernatural stepped* THE VISION!

"Though smoke has released the Vision from the supernatural world, it also is needed to release him from this world of ours, and a lack of this substance will trap him as effectively as iron bars will trap a mortal!"

The opening Vision story in *Marvel Mystery* 13 was a typical Kirby origin, complete with tons of super-scientific machinery, men clad in strange robes and goggles, glass enclosed observation booths and, of course, the usual criminals who interrupt during the experiment's critical point.

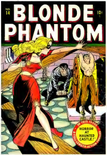
The Vision was a green-skinned entity from another dimension who could be brought here by anything from the smoke of a lighted match to a burning building. He was an interesting, offbeat character and, though Kirby drew only the early episodes, he ran for a total of 37 stories.



Copyright © 1944 Marvel Comics Group

HURRICANE was another variation of Kirby's "Gods on Earth" theme. He was the son of Thor who, like his comic cousin Mercury, fought Pluto in the person of the devil. His civilian guise was that of Harry Kane. He appeared in *Captain America* 1 as did TUK, CAVE-BOY. This time Kirby looked into the past for adventure. The splash caption predicted what was to come.

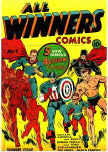
"Ak, the last of the shaggy ones, called him Tuk! But the boy didn't realize that Tuk meant 'Avenger' and that he was destined to roam the prehistoric wilds of 50,000 B. C. in search of Attilan, Island of the Gods, to reclaim a lost throne...!" As you may have guessed, Kirby again applied the "gods" idea on which to base his cave-man epic.


NO. 14
BLONDE PHANTOM
10¢
IN THIS ISSUE HORROR AT HAUNTED CASTLE!
Copyright © 1947 Marvel Comics Group

FATHER TIME was another strip heralded as a Simon and Kirby creation, but was drawn by Al Avison. Larry Scott's father had been framed and was awaiting his execution in prison. Determined to prove the man innocent, Scott raced against time tracking down the criminals only to be a few seconds too late. Time, it seemed, was on the side of injustice. Scott decided to balance the scales by becoming the masked and hooded Father Time for the law.

Timely had its share of super-girls too. MISS AMERICA was one of the best. Created by Otto Binder, she was the female counterpart of Captain America. Madeline Joyce found herself gifted with four extraordinary powers. Flight, x-ray vision, unusual strength and the wisdom of the ages. Dressed in an extremely tasteful costume of red, white and blue, she sets out to rid the world of evil. Her powers were juggled as time went on until only the ability to fly remained. And somewhere along the way she had picked up a pair of glasses. She appeared in 5 other books beside her own 2 issue span.

THE BLONDE PHANTOM topped her by guesting in 7 other titles in addition to 11 issues of her own magazine (formerly *All-Select!*). Otto Binder did the scripts and Syd Shores handled the art in a breezy, fast moving manner. She was really Louise Grant, bespectacled girl friday for the Mark Mason Detective Agency. Taking her leads from there, she'd let her hair down, slip into a mask and a sexy gown and prepare to solve the crime.

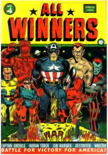


Copyright © 1941 Marvel Comics Group

Marla Drake donned a skin-tight black satin outfit and became MISS FURY for 8 issues between 1942 and 1946. Her tales (newspaper reprints of that strip) were written and drawn by lady artist Tarpe Mills. NAMORA was a spin-off from the Sub-Mariner saga and was featured for 3 issues in her own magazine, as was the Human Torch's counterpart SUN GIRL.

Timely teamed their titanic trio to form the ALL-WINNERS SQUAD for 2 issues (19 and 21) in *All-Winners Comics*. Previously the book ran their tales separately as they did in *All-Secret*. The All-Winners Squad was the Captain America/Torch/Sub-Mariner interpretation of the Justice Society.

Captain America had set the pace for the entire Timely track team. Action was the thing. Alex Schomberg's covers for almost every title were overwhelming complexities of moving figures designed to engulf the reader. The horror element permeated every Timely book. National's villains often went to prison and escaped. Timely's always died and returned.

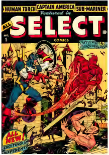

NO. 4
ALL WINNERS
10¢
WAR
CAPTAIN AMERICA HUMAN TORCH SUB MARINER DESTROYER WHIZZER
BATTLE FOR VICTORY FOR AMERICA!
Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

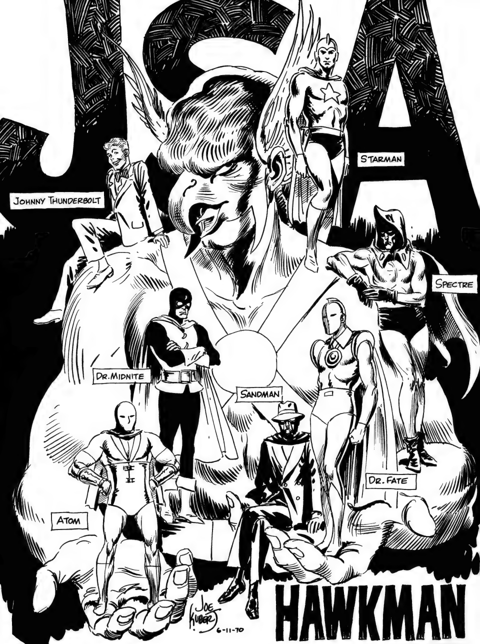
National seemed concerned with law and order. Timely summed up their policies on their covers and created an anarchic madhouse of screaming women with torn blouses, hideous fiends with razor-sharp fangs, swastika'd skeletons administering lethal gas and syringes containing unknown formulas for terror, dank dungeons overcrowded with iron maidens, racks, chains and branding irons, patriotic kids with bazookas and tommy guns and heroes of a stature that enabled them to clean up such a mess!

National's men were veteran artists and writers. Timely was the place that "broke in" the kids. National generally had better art and stories. Timely's rates were lower. But what they lacked in quality, they made up for in exuberance and vitality. National's publications had the look of discipline, but Timely's were graphic playgrounds where imaginations ran W-I-L-D, unrestrained by talent or policy. The Timely group were the closest direct descendants from the pulps.

National was clearly number one in the 40's. But Timely would have their day, or more precisely, their decade, later.

Twenty years later to be exact. ■

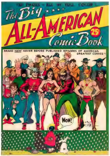

HUMAN TORCH CAPTAIN AMERICA SUB-MARINER
Featured in
ALL SELECT
NO. 1
COMICS
10¢
HITLER'S BERCHTESGADEN
ALL NEW! EXCITING! DIFFERENT!
Copyright © 1943 Marvel Comics Group


JSA
Johnny Thunderbolt
Starman
Spectre
Dr. Midnite
Sandman
Dr. Fate
Atom
Joe Kubert
6-11-70
HAWKMAN

If Timely's Comics seemed to lay stress on the art and the artists, then DC's books took the opposite approach. There the writer was the star who, if he so desired, always got top billing. And, in the galaxy of comic writers, Gardner Fox is one of the most brilliant.

Fox almost single-handedly created the All-American line of comics. After the Superman success, Harry Donenfeld had entered into a 50-50 partnership with M. C. Gaines to establish a new series of publications. With Sheldon Mayer as editorial director, Gaines produced *All-American, All-Flash, All-Star, Comic Cavalcade, Flash, Green Lantern, Sensation* and *Wonder Woman* under the All-American logo.

DC (or Detective Comics) was owned by Harry Donenfeld; Vincent A. Sullivan and F. Whitney Ellsworth were the editors. Their publications included *Action, Adventure, Batman, Boy Commandos, Detective, Leading, More Fun Star-Spangled, Superman* and *World's Finest.*

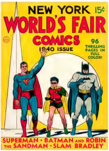

The Big All-American Comic Book
25¢
BRAND NEW NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED EPISODES OF AMERICA'S GREATEST COMICS!!
WOW!

Copyright © 1944 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

Though each had separate staffs and offices, they published everything (including Gaines' *Stories From The Bible*) under the DC slug that ran in the corner of every cover. They co-operated by running house ads for the other's books and had mutual agreements about format, quality and policy. The association gave them the advantage of being comics' biggest group and insuring their ultimate success.

It also serves to explain why there were no early crossovers among features, like Batman co-starring with Manhunter or Superman with Starman. That would come much later, after 1944, when Gaines would sell out his interests because of increasing disagreements between himself and Jack Liebowitz. Donenfeld had turned over his share of AA to Liebowitz who began as an accountant with the printing firm back in the early 30's. Because of the difficulty, Gaines requested that either party buy the other out.

The most important factor in the deal was the paper contracts which Gaines controlled. The war had created a paper shortage and any publisher who could get paper had a guaranteed sale of over 90% of his run. Upon agreement Gaines sold his half of the business for well over a half million dollars, paper contracts and all. A few months later the war ended and paper became available again. Gaines' timing was flawless, much to Liebowitz' chagrin. The two lines then merged into a single block of publications, collectively called National Periodicals, though they still retained the DC identification symbol.


NEW YORK 15¢
WORLD'S FAIR
COMICS
1940 ISSUE
96 THRILLING PAGES IN FULL COLOR!
SUPERMAN · BATMAN AND ROBIN
THE SANDMAN · SLAM BRADLEY

Copyright © 1939 National Periodical Pub. Inc.

Donenfeld and Liebowitz had also formed a partnership with Paul Sampliner who owned a distribution outfit called Independant News. This company would also have a considerable effect on the success of the DC books.

When Donenfeld acquired Wheeler-Nicholson's Publications in 1938, he kept the same staff for his own projected books. That included Vince Sullivan who had come to Wheeler-Nicholson for a job as a cartoonist and wound up being an associate editor. Sullivan worked on humor features like BEANY, JIBBY JONES, LICORICE and LAUGHING AT LIFE which he both wrote and drew.

Then he contacted pulp author Whit Ellsworth to join him as co-editor. Ellsworth turned out BILLY THE KID, CHIKKO CHAKKO and DEAR OL' DAD in addition to rendering covers. Another staffer was Sheldon Mayer who produced THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF MR. WEED in much the same style as his later SCRIBBLEY, THE RED TORNADO.

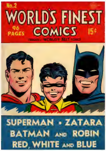
Other features at that time were DON COYOTE and CAL 'N' ALEC by Bill Patrick, CAPTAIN JIM OF THE TEXAS RANGERS and SANDOR AND THE LOST CIVILIZATION by Homer Fleming, 17-20 ON THE BLACK and CASTAWAY ISLAND by Tom Cooper, and ANDY HARDY and WHEN I WAS A BOY by Leo O'Mealia who would soon become a fine sports cartoonist for the *New York News*.

With Donenfeld at the helm, the books became more adventure oriented with stories about DALE DARING, CAPTAIN DESMO, SOCKO STRONG, SKIP SCHUYLER, BIFF BRONSON, SGT. CAREY, BULLDOG MARTIN and WING BRADY.

BEST SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

In his search for new talent, Sullivan thought of his grammar school pal, Gardner Fox. At that time, Fox, born in Brooklyn in May 1911, already had some writing experience, his first published script written during a bout of flu. Though he had chosen to be a lawyer, Fox enjoyed the medium of the comics and their loose dramatic framework. As an avid pulp reader he was quite aware of the lightning action pace and heroic characterization the comics required. *"Writing was always my first love,"* he confesses.

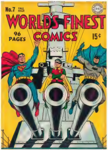
Fox handled a deluge of fictional fillers like SPEED SAUNDERS, a Tracy-like special investigator drawn by Fred Guardineer, and COTTON CARVER, a blond John Carter/Jungle Jim type delineated by Ogden Whitney. *"I drew on my legal knowledge and background to a certain extent,"* Fox revealed speaking of his creation STEVE MALONE, crusading DA who thought nothing of shooting it out in the streets with the hoods he prosecuted. Fox himself was fresh out of the law school at St. John's College and continued to practice law for 2 years while writing comics.



Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub.Inc

In June 1938, ZATARA, The Master Magician appeared in *Action's* first issue, conjured up by Fred Guardineer. Decked out in top hat and tails, Zatara was a xerox copy of Mandrake (though he did lack a moustache in the first story), complete with a Lothar-like assistant, Tong. Fox took over with the second issue and scripted a series of truly bizarre and disturbing adventures inspired by the work of Lovecraft, Quinn and Derleth in *Weird Tales. "I still have a few of those around in a closet somewhere,"* Fox admits.

Guardineer, who also did PEP MORGAN, initiated the gimmick of having Zatara say his magic spells backwards, *"Snug eb sevod"* or *"LLaw trap ot wohs edisni."* The idea was perfect for comics, as a verbal command said by the magician and as a visual effect to be viewed by the reader. Guardineer was a good artist and an even better storyteller. His style, however, was severely linear and flat, and lacked the maturity other strips soon developed.

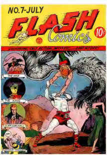


Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Fox's first major strip, THE SANDMAN, (July 1939) stalked through the pages of *Adventure* from issue 40 to 102. Created in the image of the Green Hornet, Sandman sported a green suit, cloak and snap-brim hat; his only weapon, a gas-gun. His face was hidden by a gas mask that also served functionally to protect him from the gun's fumes.

In civilian life he was Wesley Dodds, a wealthy playboy type so common in the DC books. Adventures inevitably revolved around his society girl sweetheart, Dian Belmont. The Sandman was initially drawn by Bert Christman, an ex-navy pilot who produced Scorchy Smith after Noel Sickles. Shortly after the debut of Sandman, Christman joined The Flying Tigers and was riddled in the air by the Japanese after chuting from his disabled P-40. Other Sandman artists include Craig Flessel, Ogden Whitney, Paul Norris and Cliff Young.

The Sandman was an outlaw wanted by the police and acquired his name from the fact that he often put his victims to sleep. Evidentally he had the same effect on readers which necessitated a change of costume and characterization after a few years.



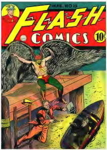
Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

In late 1939, the turning point came in Fox's career. *"M.C. Gaines started Flash Comics and asked me to write for him full time,"* Fox recalls. *"I was faced with the problem of filling a new title Gaines was about to start. As I sat by a window trying to think of what gimmicks hadn't been used yet, I noticed a bird collecting twigs for a nest. The bird would swoop down, pick up the twig and fly away. I thought 'wouldn't it be great if the bird was a lawman and the twig a crook!' "*

It was great!

The premiere issue of *Flash Comics* ran a pair of Fox heroes back-to-back. The nest-building bird Fox had noticed became the mighty HAWKMAN. Like a contemporary Icarus, Hawkman flapped his winged way into the super hero spectrum and across half the covers of *Flash Comics.*

Carter Hall, the reincarnation of ancient Egyptian Prince Knufu, flew with the aid of an anti-gravity belt composed of "ninth metal." Able to communicate with birds, he assumed the guise of Hawkman, donning the bizarre hawk headgear with its gaping beak and huge, bulky wings that trailed off behind him looking more like fur than feathers.



Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub.Inc

Dennis Neville illustrated the first three Hawkman flights then passed the quill to Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff. Carter Hall became Flash Gordon, rocketing through a midnight world of Raymond, Hogarth and Foster swipes. Nevertheless, Moldoff put a great deal of effort into Hawkman and his other strips CLIP CARSON and THE BLACK PIRATE. Technically it was the best drawn DC feature yet. Placed against the ever-present background of a dilated moon, Shelly's Hawkman streaked the sky with speed lines.

Some of the finest art to grace Hawkman is found in a single story in *Flash* 87 rendered by Everett Raymond Kinster whose uncanny imitation of Alex Raymond was uncommonly close to the genuine article.

Exotic settings lured Hawkman with an inner compulsion that seemed to reveal his Egyptian origins.

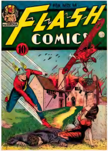
"He battles evil that grows in the present with his great collection of weapons of the past! Carried aloft on his great wings, the Hawkman watches with eyes, like the bird he was named after, for the first sign of wrong doing!"

When Shiera Sanders, his female friend and confidant, joined him as Hawkgirl in issue 24, the aviary avengers became one of comics first male-female crime-fighting teams.

Wielding crossbows, maces, axes, bolas, spears and shields, the flying furies combined strength and intellect to combat the Golden Mummy, the Raven, the Hummingbird, Chance, the Coin, the Hood and a horde of others who never returned. When Hawkman defeated them it was forever, with one exception – The Ghost.

Wearing stove-pipe trousers, cut-away waistcoat, ruffled cravat and a flowing opera cape like a Victorian spectre, he was a rather insubstantial villain. The Ghost's top hat was suspended in mid-air, a monocle where his eye might have been. This walking wardrobe, clad entirely in white, returned from the dead on four occasions.

The Hawk, as he was frequently called in the early days, did double duty as a Justice Society member and, throughout his career, would change his hawk headgear a dozen times. When Shelly left, Joe Kubert took Hawkman under his wing and reached still greater heights with skillful layouts, crisp story-telling and powerful compositions. His plentiful blacks and incisive juggling of varied shots injected the winged wonders with a new life that would endure the length of *Flash Comics.*

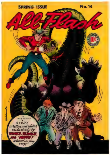


Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub.Inc

The Hawkman had won his wings and took his rightful place among National's second string heroes. Yet he wasn't the only mimic of mythology to score heavily on DC's popularity scale. He split the credits with another. *"Faster than the streak of lightning in the sky, swifter than the speed of light itself, fleeter than the rapidity of* *thought is...THE FLASH, reincarnation of the winged Mercury!"* Thus began the adventures of the fastest man alive in *Flash Comics,* January 1940.

Created by Gardner Fox and inspired by legendary god of speed, Mercury, The Flash raced into second position in DC's line-up of super heroes. Like his mythical twin, the modern day Mercury came complete with winged helmet and boots, attired, not surprisingly, in a costume of familiar red, yellow and blue with a thunderbolt across the chest. And, like Superman, he had no mask.

The origin story plotline could easily have been inspired by the Charles Atlas sand-in-the-face ad. Football scrub Jay Garrick is jilted by his girl. Overcome by hard water fumes during a late-night experiment at Midwestern University, Jay regains consciousness weeks later to discover he possesses super speed, which enables him to win Midwestern's game that Saturday. *"Boy, this is the stuff! A football star and a date with Joan tonight!"*

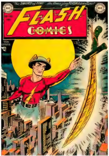

SPRING ISSUE
No.14
All-Flash
10¢
THIS ISSUE STORY written and edited exclusively by WINKY, BLINKY AND NOODY! whew! are they crazy!

Copyright © 1944 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

Catching bullets, an old Doc Savage trick, was the Flash's capital feat, an effect he performs three times during his origin story and once on the cover.

Harry Lampert drew the first two issues then stepped aside for Everett Hibbard who remained the Flash's principal illustrator throughout the forties. The Flash's prowess and performance evolved with the number of his appearances as the artist and writer became familiar with the character. The art, however, left something to be desired, having neither the appealing simplicity of Shuster nor the exaggerated stylishness of Kane.

The sheer dissimilarity of the Flash compared to other strips was enough to put him in the running of DC's second string stars. His popularity could never have been predicated upon the art which consisted of an endless collection of medium two-shots always drawn at eye level.



Copyright © 1949 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

As the demand for more Flash stories grew, other artists began to pace the fastest man alive – Martin Naydel, Shelly Moldoff, Irwin Hasen and other DC staffers. No one however, including editor Sheldon Mayer, saw the visual possibilities in what should have been the most graphic strip of all.

Flash's success seemed verified by his billing in *All-Star* (Summer 1940), *All-Flash* (Summer 1941), *Big All-American* (1944) and *Comic Cavalcade* (Winter 1943) a 96-page, 15 cent book that parlayed the efforts of the Flash, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and a half dozen fillers.

Unintentionally the monarch of motion opened the floodgates for a cascade of speedy simulations, many of whom lapped him in the race toward excellence only to be beaten in competition for circulation. JOHNNY QUICK, QUICKSILVER, THE TWISTER, MERCURY, THE HUMAN METEOR, SILVER STREAK, CYCLONE, THE WHIZZER, HURRICANE were all fabled for their fleet feats.

The Flash, paradoxically, reached his apex just before his demise. The Ragdoll, the Thorn, the Fiddler, the Turtle, the Eel, the Thinker and Star Sapphire no longer wrecked havoc in Central City alone. They threatened the world. The scope of the stories expanded. The viscount of velocity discovered lost civilizations and alien worlds beyond barriers only his super speed could surmount.

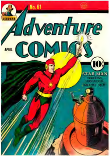
The Flash finally hit his stride when Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert and Lee Elias overtook him. Authors Bob Kanigher and John Broome invented new uses for accelerated limbs. Flash was to run non-stop for 9 years and a record 104 issues before he dropped out of the race in February 1949.

As if all this wasn't enough, Gardner Fox was to score again in the May 1940 issue of *More Fun* with DR. FATE, one of the most colorful and confusing figures in the comic chronology. The yellow boots, gloves and cape over blue tights were almost a requirement as far as super costumes went, the difference was in his helmet. It completelely covered his face and head, thus concealing the element of facial expression so vital to comic dramatics.

Almost 20 adventures later he was gifted with a half-helmet but lost his cape. Then, he discovered he couldn't fly. It was a super comedy of errors. Changes in content and costume were so frequent they would be difficult to list. Fate even listed a number of conflicting origin stories. Here's the one I like best:

Archeologist Kent Nelson travels to the Valley of Ur, attempting to solve the riddle of the pyramids. There, he discovers the tomb of Nabu The Wise and inadvertently releases him from a state of suspended animation. Nabu tells Nelson he is from the planet Cilia and proceeds to teach him the secret of changing matter into energy and energy into matter. Before he returns to his home planet, he gifts Nelson with the blue and gold outfit to be used in the guise of Dr. Fate. Fate lived, interestingly enough, in a tall, eerie stone tower without doors or windows in Salem and practiced his mystic powers entering it simply by walking through the walls.

Dr. Fate was rendered first by Howard Sherman, then Stan Asch, Bernie Klein, Jon Kozlak and finally Joe Kubert. He doubled as a Justice Society member and managed to practice his craft until January 1944.

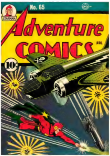


Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub Inc

Fox's next feature was to run considerably longer, from April 1941 to February 1946. The opening splash in *Adventure* 61 read, *"When sinister scientific forces seek to take over the nation by paralyzing power and communication facilities, they run afoul of a foe possessing powers more potent than their own...a figure of night and mystery...the amazing* STARMAN!

"From Maine to California and from Canada to the Mexican border weird events of dire consequence transpire. The people of a great nation are on the verge of panic, for the very foundations of their lives are being blasted from under them! Telegraph wires glow white hot and melt into consuming flame! All telephone communication ends as the nation's switchboards fail!

"Dynamos in great power plants unaccountably flare up in searing sheets of loosed electrical energy! Transportation is paralyzed as all motors and engines burst into flames! As the continent quivers from the mysterious events, distraught military officials confer with Woodley Allen, ace troubleshooter of the F.B.I."



Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

Chin in hand Allen ponders, *"This is a nightmare! There's only one man who may be able to get to the bottom of this. I've got to contact him! And wherever he is, the ultra-short-wave emanations from this radio-active capsule will flash him my call!"*

Cut to the Falmingo Club in Gotham City where playboy Ted Knight is entertaining his girl friend with pantywaist dialogue about his fragile and sickly disposition. He uses the standard *"I need a rest, dear!"* excuse to get away from the lady.

"Then, Ted Knight divests himself of his outer clothes and assumes his night personality as Starman! The mystery man of night lifts the magnetic tube aloft, and its strange mechanism is quickly charged with stellar energy."

Standing heroically before a hovering moon he declares, *"For thousands of years, men have spoken of the mysterious powers of the stars...but I am the first to discover that radiated starlight can be harnessed and used scientifically."*

He zooms skyward using the gravity rod, to meet the waiting FBI man who tells him the disasters are the work of The Brotherhood Of The Electron (a villain's union?) who are about to set up a dictatorship. With his gravity rod, Starman traces the mysterious energy to a mountain stronghold and encounters the evil Dr. Doog.

After a series of Flash Gordonish trap door encounters, Starman wrecks Doog's ultra-dynamo, collapses the mountain on him and returns to his society girlfriend.

"I didn't go to a sanitarium! I just went home and slept! What was all that nonsense about lights failing?"

"It wouldn't matter to you, my brave boy, unless you sleep with your

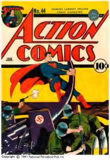
lights on!" she replies curtly.

Starman, except for the helmet, was an imitation of Superman. His costume was literally a duplicate, in red and green instead of red and blue. It is, perhaps, the reason the astral avenger never became as prominent as others like The Flash or Hawkman, though he too, was a JSA member.

Obviously inspired by Raymond's style, artist Jack Burnley told Starman's tales with tastefully solid drawing that placed him among the comics better draftsmen. His work epitomized DC's position and policies more than any other. In fact, they assigned him to their top character, Superman, to prove the point. Burnley's Superman set the pace for years afterward.

He recalls his Starman work, *"Whitney Ellsworth wanted a new type of character in the way of a Superman-Batman. I designed all kinds of costumes after I somehow settled on the name Starman! My character was never as big as Kane's or Siegel and Shuster's circulation wise. If he was, I imagine I would have went into the real big money like the three guys before me!*

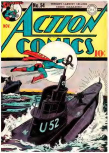
"My brother did the lettering for the strip and Raymond Perry the coloring. He was an old fellow at the time, but I believe he did the coloring for all of Whitney Ellsworth's comics!"


No.44
WORLD'S LARGEST SELLING COMIC MAGAZINE!
JAN.
ACTION COMICS
10¢

Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub Inc

Burnley's career began early. *"When I was fourteen my sister took me to visit King Features Syndicate. I had been drawing as far back as I can remember so, as I recall, I took along a few of my drawings. Somebody there must have liked my work, for when I left later that day I had a job with them. I didn't get my own strip right away. My job consisted of emptying waste-paper baskets and sharpening pencils. I was seventeen when they gave me my first syndicated feature, a sports cartoon. I was on that only a few years. When King bought out a smaller syndicate, a better sports cartoonist came in the deal, so they let me go.*

"I thought I should try my luck at illustrating full scale comic books. I walked into National with a few samples and they remembered me right away from my sports cartoons. Whitney Ellsworth, then editor of the Superman and Batman comics, hired me and gave me a Superman script to illustrate right away!"


No.54
WORLD'S LARGEST SELLING COMIC MAGAZINE!
NOV.
ACTION COMICS
10¢
U52

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

In addition to doing the covers of *Action, Adventure, Batman, Superman* and *World's Finest,* he pencilled all the Batman Sunday strips and a few dailies.

Fox's final DC package unfolded in *Star-Spangled's* first issue, October 1941. Buck Dare, American reporter in London, put on the guise of CAPTAIN X OF THE R.A.F. to counter the Nazi menace. He operated out of an underground hangar and flew a specially equipped plastic airplane he called Jenny. Fox teamed with artist Jon Blummer to turn out a scant 7 tales. It seemed as though X just couldn't keep pace with the fast company he was in. Or to put it another way, as a pilot, he bombed.

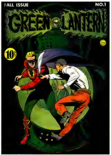
But one miss in so many didn't mean a thing to Fox, if anything it helped temper his judgment. Somewhere between his DC assignments, Fox found time to create a host of new heroes for another publisher. His friend Vince Sullivan had switched to Columbia Publications, and Fox proceeded to populate their books with his characters. SKYMAN and THE FACE led the parade, followed by MARVELO, Monarch of Magicians, RICK ROGERS, TOM KERRY, ROCKY RYAN and SPYMASTER (later named Spychief, still later The Cloak and probably given a lot more names by confused readers).

As Fox's credits continued to mount, a gallery of supermen multiplied in the DC ranks.

"In brightest day, blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight! Let those who worship evil's might, beware my power, Green Lantern's light!" Not to be outdone, in July 1940, a newcomer tossed his hat, or more precisely his mask, in the super hero ring. THE GREEN LANTERN premiered in *All-American* 16.

Martin Nodell had submitted a sketch for the new character to editor Sheldon Mayer who, in turn, called writer Bill Finger to handle the scripts. *"We needed a name for his alter ego so naturally I thought of Aladdin and his magic lamp,"* Finger related. *"I suggested the name Alan Ladd and Shelly said, 'That's ridiculous, who'd believe that?' So we substituted the name Alan Scott. A little while later Alan Ladd turned up as a movie star. Shelly could have kicked himself everytime he thought of the publicity we might have had."* It is, in fact, not at all difficult to imagine the reel Alan Ladd as the Green Lantern. Coincidentally, DC would later publish *The Adventures of Alan Ladd* as a comic.

The same lure that made ancient eastern potentates plot to possess Aladdin's lamp drew readers toward the iridescent glow of the Green Lantern. Power, pure and simple.

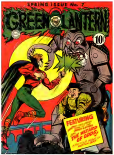


Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub Inc

The origin story went like this: A rival dynamites a bridge on which construction engineer Alan Scott is working. Miraculously saved by a Green Lantern he finds himself holding, Scott hears the lantern narrate an ancient tale of death, life and power. After fashioning a ring from the metal of the loquacious lantern, Scott is told that it will transform thought into reality and must touch the green lantern once every 24 hours to recharge its power.

Intent on exacting swift justice, Scott sets off through the sky. After a brief setback in which he is knocked unconscious by a wooden club (thereby discovering that wood is the only element over which he has no control), Scott subdues his antagonists with his fists, an exertion he later finds unnecessary after realizing use of the ring. Dekker, the man responsible for the bridge disaster, dies of a heart attack while signing his confession. In the last panel of his origin, the Green Lantern first appears in costume, not, however, before taking the super heroes' pledge as prescribed by the unwritten comic law.

"Somehow I feel as if destiny has taken hold of my life...that this is only the beginning...that I must continue to fight against evil! If I must fight evil beings, I must make myself a dreaded figure! I must have a costume that is so bizarre that once I am seen I will never be forgotten! I shall shed my light over dark evil...for the dark things cannot stand the light...the light of the GREEN LANTERN!"



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

No comic hero ever spoke truer words. His costume was indeed a bizarre collection of miscellanea; a black halloween-type mask, a red buccaneer shirt, green leotards, a purple and green opera-length cloak with a high collar, red boots roman laced with yellow straps and a brown belt. Still, once the artist and writer began to "find" the character, he developed into one of DC's most popular, was awarded his own book, served in the Justice Society and appeared in *Comic Cavalcade.* He wasn't kidding when he said, *"This was only the beginning."*

Finger freely tailored the Aladdin's lamp tale to fit the Green Lantern saga. Instead of a genii granting the man's wishes, Finger substituted the element of will power. *"Power shall be yours if you have faith in yourself. Lose that faith and you lose the energetic power of the green lantern, for WILL POWER is the flame of the green lantern,"* the lantern revealed.

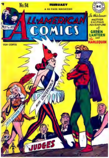
The ceremony of the ring charging its power by the god-like glow of the lantern was almost religious in content. The man was compelled to have a communion with the lantern to establish his power and identity and to insure his security and safety. Then too, Green Lantern's pledge could easily have been a prayer. And didn't the lamp, forged from a meteor, have the divine right over life, death and power. The psychological implications seemed to work, the strip was a hit.

Kryptonite gave the man of steel something to wrinkle his forehead over. Green Lantern ducked any wooden nickels. Almost at birth he contracted that most dreaded of literary diseases, mononotony. His sole weakness created a pattern that was doomed to eternally repeat itself. Every story was a writer's challenge to script a different tale around Green Lantern's wood hang-up.

Less than a year after his birth, Green Lantern adopted a sidekick, Doiby Dickles, an overweight Brooklyn hack driver created in the image of Lou Costello. *"Lantrin! A car bulgin' wit' crooks filled Goitrude fulla holes as dey drove past! (sniff-sniff) I'd like da chancet to get me hands on em!"* Goitrude or Gertrude was Doiby's taxi cab.

Wearing his own Green Lantern suit in some early issues, Doiby was a thinly disguised ploy to stretch scripts. He would permit a defeated Solomon Grundy, Crusher Crock or Icicle to escape, thus delaying the unavoidable end. Or he would be captured by Vandal Savage, the Gambler, the Sky Pirate or the Fool and necessitate a lengthy rescue.

Author Bob Kanigher created Green Lantern's most interesting adversary, the vivacious redheaded HARLEQUIN. Outfitted in stripped tights and elizabethan collar, she fought the green gladiator to a standstill only to prove she was the perfect match for him. In a typical comic book coincidence situation, she and Green Lantern worked side-by-side every day at radio station WXYZ, he as Alan Scott program director, she as Molly Maynne his secretary. Of course, neither suspected the truth about the other.

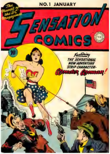


Copyright © 1948 National Periodical Pub Inc

It was love at first sight. *"I never had a date because I was too athletic, no man could beat me in sports. I had to hide my talents and become a mousey secretary. Now, for the first time, I meet Green Lantern, my match, and he has no time for me...only for crooks!"* And so saying, she became the colorful Harlequin.

The lady crime-wave sported a pair of mask-like spectacles that could create hypnotic illusions and an eye-searing glare that rendered her opponents momentarily blind. In addition she carried a jester's mandolin that housed 101 gimmicks for checkmating the Green Lantern.

As often as she battled against him, she also fought by his side and eventually became government agent H-9. Their friendly rivalry was often more palatable than the Kent/Lane relationship, certainly more interesting and animated. She became so popular that an entire issue was once devoted to her antics.


NO.1 JANUARY
The Newest of the DC Magazines
SENSATION COMICS
10¢
Featuring THE SENSATIONAL NEW ADVENTURE STRIP CHARACTER-
Wonder Woman!

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Martin Nodell, Green Lantern's chief artist, drew one of many irresolute versions of the emerald crusader. Irwin Hasen, Jon Kozlak, Howard Purcell, Paul Reinman and almost everyone else in the DC bullpen would lend pencil or brush to the green gladiator at one time or another. The last few years of Green Lantern's span was regenerated by the presence of Lee Elias, Carmine Infantino and, most of all, Alex Toth with his exciting breakdowns and intelligently paced storytelling.

If the early Green Lantern lacked substantial artistic guidance, his list of writers was exceptionally impressive. Hugo award winner Alfred Bester took over after Bill Finger, then Henry Kuttner (his wife C. L. Moore loved Doiby), John Broome and Bob Kanigher. Few super-heroes could ever boast of such an assemblage of SF and pulp authors.

Bester was responsible for recruiting another member into the DC fold. Having heard a position had opened up in the bullpen, he contacted Julie Schwartz, who with Weisinger operated the Solar Sales Service, a literary agency for S-F writers. Julie had previously been co-publisher of the *Science Fiction Digest* (later changed to *Fantasy Magazine*) a fanzine whose most notable achievement was enlisting the services of such top authors as A. Merritt, "Doc" Smith, Campbell, O. A. Kline, Hamilton and Binder, to each contribute a chapter in a fantastic round-robin 18-chapter epic titled *Cosmos.*

On February 21, 1944 Schwartz was interviewed by Shelly Mayer who hired him as script editor and proofreader for the All-American books. Twenty years later, Julie would replace Jack Schniff at the helm of the Batman magazines and chart a new course for their popularity. In the meantime he helped Mayer with the *Flash, Green Lantern, All-Star, All-American, Sensation, Comic Cavalcade* and others.

In 1948 an ambitious animal act, Streak the Wonder Dog, stole the show and began easing Green Lantern out of his own book.

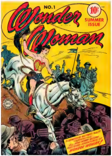
The Green Lantern, accompanied by Hawkman and the Flash, completed the triumvirate of National's second line of defense. They alone remained to fight the good fight when the less enduring of their brotherhood found their way into comic book heaven.

Except for WONDER WOMAN.

The comic forerunner of the women's liberation movement, Wonder Woman first made her cause public in a short story that ran in *All-Star* 8, Dec. 1941. The following month she appeared in *Sensation,* then her own book in Summer 1942. She even had a daily newspaper strip. Fast work even for a wonder woman. To say she was a smash would be an understatement.

Variations of her origin story were told in all three books. They explained the planet Earth was ruled by rival gods, Mars, God of War and Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty. *"My men shall rule with the sword!"* Mars proclaimed. *"My women shall conquer men with love!"* replied the blonde goddess, foreshadowing the proceedings of every Wonder Woman story thereafter.

The world was in chaos as Mars' swordsmen pillaged and plundered, *"Women were sold as slaves, they were cheaper than cattle."*



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

"What say, hero! I'll trade these five beautiful slave girls for thy goat!" bargains a Greek soldier.

"Bah! It would take a dozen women to get MY goat!" comes the reply.

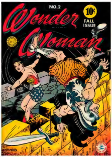
Meanwhile, Aphrodite had built a race of super women called Amazons with her own hands. *"So long as your leader wears this magic girdle* (a gold belt not a Maidenform) *you Amazons shall be unconquerable!"*

And sure enough, they were! Even Mars was defeated. Outraged, he enlisted the aid of Hercules who was also beaten. Down but not out, he decided to use another approach, more true to his species, one that had yet to fail. . .skullduggery. *"Hercules used woman's own weapon against Queen Hippolyte. He made love to her!"* The caption told.

And afterward he ran off with her girdle. Humiliating, to say the least, but it worked. Momentarily the Amazons were conquered. Hippolyte prayed for forgiveness, and Aphrodite answered, *"You may break your chains. But you must wear these wrist bands always to teach you the folly of submitting to men's domination!"*

Well, as the story goes, like mother, like daughter. The Amazons escaped and voyaged to Paradise Isle which no man could enter. Under the guidance of Athena, Hippolyte fashioned a small statue which came to life as baby Diana, the Queen's daughter. A neat trick.

She grows swift and strong over the years and at 15 receives her bracelets of submission. *"Beauty and happiness is your Amazon birthright so long as you remain on Paradise Island!"* she is told.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Enter Steve Trevor, army intelligence officer, whose plane crashes near the Amazon sanctuary. Though it is forbidden, Diana brings him back to life with her purple healing ray while her mother nearly has a stroke.

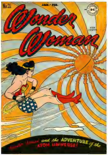
But the world itself is at war. Aphrodite decides an Amazon must go to America to help win the conflict. She declares a tournament of strength to determine the emissary. Diana wins and is awarded a costume and a lasso made from the magic girdle. She takes Trevor back to America in her invisible robot plane and impersonates hospital nurse Diana Prince, to whom Wonder Woman gives money to leave the country.

"Wait! Who are you?" a doctor calls after her as she leaves Trevor.

"You wouldn't understand! I'm just...a woman!" is her reply.

From his hospital bed Trevor sighs, *"My WONDER WOMAN!"*

Determined to prove herself the strongest human being alive, Wonder Woman delighted in beating up men. Aphrodite's Law explained her weakness. When an Amazon girl permits a man to chain her bracelets of submission together she becomes as weak as other women in a man-ruled world! Diana was often punished for being deceived by handsome men. Men were not to be trusted. Wonder Woman's stories were allegorical tales told by mothers to their daughters.


No.21
JAN.-FEB.
Wonder Woman
TEN CENTS
and the ADVENTURE of the ATOM UNIVERSE!

Copyright © 1946 National Periodical Pub Inc

Garbed in an eagle-crested merry widow, multi-starred bermuda shorts (she wore culottes in her initial appearance) and boots, the beautiful Amazon seemed strangely out of place among the supporting characters dressed in togas, armor and gladiator regalia. No one ever seemed to notice. Maybe they declined to mention it for fear of a sound thrashing. She shared her adventures with Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls, whom she communicated with by mental radio. They were equally chaste.

Rounding out her accoutrements were a pair of bracelets which deflected bullets and the golden lasso that compelled anyone imprisoned within its loop to obey the commands of its wielder. We leave the reader to speculate upon any analogies that may come to mind.

She flew into encounters with the winged maidens of Venus, Saturno, Uvo of Uranus, Pluto's Kingdom, the Baroness Paula Von Gunter, the Evilness of Saturn, Lord Conquest, the Cheetah, Dr. Psycho, Queen Atomia, the Mask, Hypota, Mars, Conquest, Greed and Deception. Her tales largely elminiated restrictions of space and time.

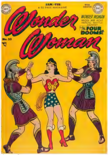
The brainstorm of William Moulton Marston, psychologist and inventor of the lie detector, the Wonder Woman strip was aimed at the girl reader. Marston (writing under the pseudonym Charles Moulton) was allegedly getting percentage of the action, which helps explain why a man of his position would undertake such a venture. He was also telling his philosophy about male/female relationships, one he would later write about professionally in hardbound book form.

Marston used his psychological skill and perception to write tales that were exceptionally appealing to the juvenile mind. He drew freely upon myth and legend to fictionally fabricate the Wonder Woman saga. His scripts were super fairy tales calculated to hit the bullseye of the market at which he was aiming. Marston appealed to his audience on a very basic psycho-sexual level that every 10 year old understood.

No story ever finished without ample helpings of shackles, chains, discipline, subjugation and bondage, enough to please even the most hardened S&M disciple. If you had a fetish, chances were you could find it here somewhere. Or, if you had none, you could take your pick and find something you liked. There was certainly something for everybody and enough for all.

It could be said Wonder Woman was the female counterpart of Superman but only in sales and strength. While Superman represented a part of the future today, Wonder Woman let only the barest minimum of the present into her stories.

Much of the success of Wonder Woman can undoubtedly be traced to artist Harry G. Peter. Previously, he had rendered the adventures of MAN O' METAL in *Heroic Comics,* and FEARLESS FLINT in *Famous Funnies.* Peter's artistic appeal to a juvenile audience is difficult to assess. To begin with, it was different than anything else appearing at the time. It was as far from Shuster as Wolverton was to Raymond.

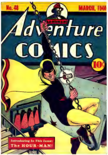


Copyright © 1948 National Periodical Pub Inc

Peter had an unseductive linear style, very organic and two-dimensional, almost art nouveau. His work had the look of a woodcut, embodying bold, sweeping strokes that looked like he drew more with the brush than a pencil. He translated everything into terms of a masculine, yet very personal line. His style was as strange and distrubing as the material it represented. Even though he had an inscrutable approach to continuity and storytelling, his work was forceful to the point of being compelling. His figures seemed to float rather than stand, facial expressions ranged from mouth open to mouth closed. Still, it was more polished than primitive, probably because Peter was in his late 40's at the time.

Wonder Woman was teamed with the Flash and Green Lantern in *Comic Cavalcade* to form the All-American counterpart of the Superman/Batman/Robin amalgam in *World's Finest.* With typical female aplomb, she outlived all the men in her life. But then considering the life she led, it's no wonder, woman.

The avenging Amazon was accompanied in *Sensation* by a brace of athletes. Child prodigy Terry Sloan was bored with life. He went through college in a year, stacked up a room full of athletic trophies and made a fortune out of everything he touched. For relaxation, he became the hooded MR. TERRIFIC. His claim to fame was the insignia on his chest. While others had a big red S or a bat, he sported the motto "fair play." Charlie Reizenstein and Hal Sharp thought up that one.



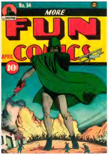
Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub Inc

"As night cloaks the city with a mantle of blackness, a dark, lithe figure can be seen darting thru the shadows...muscles ripple under his skintight costume, as he prowls with the silent tread of a great WILDCAT!" Inspired by a Green Lantern comic, heavyweight champ Ted Grant becomes the costumed crime smasher to clear himself of a fake murder rap. Initially managed by Bill Finger and Irwin Hasen, a gang of others like Reinman, Meskin, Sachs and even Bernie Krigstein trained in his corner. Kubert handled him with real punch before throwing in the towel in mid-1949.

Faster than you could say *"up, up and awayyy!"* a legion of supermen sprang up. Never before was there so much justice; never before was there so much crime. In March 1940, Tex "Tick-Tock" Tyler became the man of the hour. HOURMAN was resplendent in a costume of yellow and black, with an hourglass (to measure the shifting sands of strength) hung around his neck.

"The Hourman, famed defender of the right, is really Rex Tyler, meek and mild chemist who has discovered Miraclo which for sixty minutes gives him extraordinary powers. With the Minute-Men Of America which he founded, he fights crime." Adventure Comics clocked his time at exactly 3 years during which he also served as a JSA member. Hourman was supported by the Minute Men, a gang of neighborhood kids with short-wave radios. Later he was aided by Thorndyke, a humorous "second", before his time finally ran out.

Hourman was created by Bernard Baily who had previously drawn Tex Thomson, MR. AMERICA. His art could be compared favorably with that of Shuster's. His approach to telling a story remained true to the tradition of early comics; no close-ups, 8 panels to a page, almost all long shots.



Copyright © 1940 National Periodical Pub Inc

Baily had recently teamed with Jerry Siegel in February 1940 to materialize a 5 year run of the green (originally blue) and gray form of THE SPECTRE in *More Fun.* In many ways, The Spectre was just as original as Superman; he was certainly more powerful. He could fly, hover, become invisible, walk through walls, grow, shrink, transform matter and brawl with the best of them. In fact, his powers were limitless.

His dual identity was handled with equal ingenuity. Siegel often found interesting ways to incorporate it into his tales. *"As the forces of the law close in, a desperate cornered criminal leaps out from hiding in a surprise move and holds the officers at bay with levelled weapon! But Jim Corrigan, hardboiled detective, disregards the order to halt."* Corrigan advances amid a hail of gunfire and disarms the thug with a left cross.

"It's a miracle! How that bullet could have missed him is beyond me!" queries a cop.

Corrigan muses quietly, *"They'd think it even more of a miracle if they knew that the bullet struck me and passed directly thru me...and I was unharmed!"*

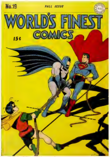
A caption explained the reason. *"What his associates do not realize is that Jim Corrigan is an Earthbound Ghost! After being killed by gangsters, Jim learned that eternal rest could not* *be his until he rid the earth of all crime! Thus was created The Spectre who battles crime with supernatural powers at his command!"*

At a critical moment in the story, The Spectre found himself swept into space. *"Jim Corrigan, once again judgment is to be passed upon you!"* a voice thundered from nowhere.

"We have relented – your mission is too gigantic for one individual – you shall be permitted to pass on to eternal rest! The decision is yours! Eternal rest – or eternally earthbound! What is your answer?"

"I choose to remain earthbound!" he replies, dooming his soul to haunting Earth forever.

The tale ends as The Spectre confronts the kidnappers he has sought out, looming large as a giant before them. *"Hypnotically, the two men turn – shriek as The Spectre permits them to glimpse death in his eyes, and die of fright!"* No social work for him.



Copyright © 1945 National Periodical Pub Inc

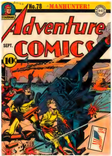
The final caption summed it up, *"Now doomed to haunt crime and the world forever, The Spectre begins his lone battle against the underworld in earnest!"*

In earnest perhaps, but certainly not alone. Some DC crime smashers were not only similar in popularity but in stature. THE ATOM appeared in a series of mini-adventures in *All-American* and a half dozen others. He was really five-footer Al Pratt who had developed a superhuman build and decided to pulverize crime little-by-little.

One of his companions in the same book was the blind Dr. Charles McNider whose infra red glasses enabled him to see during the day. At night his eyes surpassed those of a jungle cat, even in the dense blackness of the black-out bombs he hurled as the colorfully dressed DR. MID-NITE.

THE CRIMSON AVENGER and his aide, Wing, lurked through the pages of *Detective* (October 1938) as a copy of the Green Hornet and Kato. Like the Hornet, he was newspaperman Lee Travis who picked up crime leads as they were reported. He imitated the super hero trend later by trading his red overcoat for a pair of red tights and his cape for a pair of yellow shorts. It was difficult to tell if the change was an improvement or not.

In November 1941, Mort Weisinger went 20,000 leagues under the sea to catch DC's version of the Sub-Mariner. *"Son of a marine scientist who discovered ways of living underwater, AQUAMAN is able to dive to the ocean's bottom and span the vast expanses of the waters at tremendous speed! His lair is an ancient temple of lost Atlantis, long submerged and forgotten, where he keeps his stock of scientific equipment! From there, he swims forth to keep the freedom of the seas in tropic and arctic waters alike!"*



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Weisinger bullseyed again with GREEN ARROW AND SPEEDY, created after mystery writer Edgar Wallace's *Green Archer*. When criminals threatened, Oliver Queen and Roy Harper donned their red and green garb and, with the help of their catapult car, sprang into action. They loosed their shafts in several titles including *World's Finest*.

TNT, the human hand grenade and DAN, THE DYNA-MITE were another Weisinger team. When the two comrades shook hands, their rings, positive and negative, pressed together causing an explosive chemical reaction that produced the powerhouse pair.

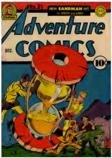
Mort followed up with another feature that has particular significance today. He wrote it this way, *"Criminals are like insects to TARANTULA; greedy flies, stinging scorpions, groveling worms! And his pleasure and pride is to tangle and bind them! Masked, mysterious...his feet wearing vacuum disks, which can climb heights or adhere to ceilings...his greatest weapon the miraculous web-gun, which shoots strands of woven silk to snare, trap or tie...that is TARANTULA, terror of injustice!"*

Though he sported a purple and yellow costume, Tarantula was obviously the forerunner of Spiderman, just as the pulp's Spider was his. He wove his fateful webs in the first 19 issues of *Star-Spangled*.

He was replaced by Libby Belle Lawrence, the axis-busting LIBERTY BELLE. Because the German's killed her father, she dons the blue shirt with the bell symbol, yellow riding breeches and boots, and decides to wage a war of her own. Wearing her long blonde hair seductively over one eye, she became the Veronica Like of comics, written by Don Cameron and drawn by Chuck Winter. Ring your chimes, anyone?

DC's only other heroine was the equally glamorous BLACK CANARY. As lady florist (?) Dinah Drake, she slipped into her black satin leotard and mesh tights to rout the lawless in *Flash Comics*. The blonde beauty was hatched by Bob Kanigher and Carmine Infantino in the Johnny Thunder strip. She soon took over and starred with her private-eye lover, Larry Lance, in a 2 year series of fast-paced crime thrillers.

In February 1942, Weisinger tuned in the comic scene with a refreshing new character called AIR WAVE. Without the green and yellow guise, he was DA Larry Jordan who cut through red tape to serve justice more swiftly. Instead of the usual sidekick schtick, Mort teamed him with a talky parrot named Static. Air Wave's radio aerial helmet harnessed electrical energy that powered his one-wheeled skates. He often traveled along high-tension wires, Static flying behind him.



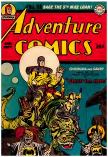
Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Batman inker George Roussos took over the art chores from Lee Harris and produced the best colored strip of its time, *"I colored it to cover up any weaknesses,"* he says modestly. Roussos was the first to experiment with color in comics; the strips testifying to his success.

THE STAR-SPANGLED KID AND STRIPESY was the product of Jerry Siegel and Hal Sherman, though neither should have admitted it. But then what could you expect from a strip with such a name. The art looked like it was done by Bob Kane working left-handed. Somebody must have like it because it lasted until 1948 in *Star-Spangled*.

THE SHINNING KNIGHT and his horse. Winged Victory swashbuckled their way through the pages of *Adventure*. The crusade was led by artists Flessel, Cazeneuve and Winter. Even Frank Frazetta squired the armored avenger for a while. The concept was simply *A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court* in reverse.

Justin once told how it had happened to him, *"As a reward for deeds of valor, Merlin conferred on my sword and my mail, magic powers...and on Victory the gift of flight. Later I fought the wicked giant, the terror of the north. But though I overcame him, I fell into a crevice and was encased in gleaming ice, remaining thus for some centuries. Until, at long last, I was freed, to enter a world as different from that of King Arthur's time as day is from night."* Though he was never the novelty The Spectre was, or as mysterious as the Green Lantern, he stayed to follow his quest for 10 years.

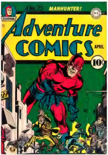


Copyright © 1944 National Periodical Pub Inc

Some DC features are better left mercifully to obscurity, but this one persistently appeared in so many books it would be impossible to exclude it. *Flash Comics* described it thusly: JOHNNY THUNDER'S *got a pet* THUNDERBOLT *that works for him...he doesn't know how he got it or why or when it comes around (the truth is, a Badhnisian witch doctor gave him his power)...all Johnny knows is that when the power is on (and it lasts for an hour at a time) he can make anything and everything obey his slightest wish! The secret words which Johnny must say to get control of his thunderbolt are CEI-U, and if you want to say them in plain American you say SAY YOU, because that's what it sounds like!"* No comment! Why waste words!

DC's most delightfully strip, ROBOTMAN has since become one of the comics forgotten masterpieces. He began in April 1942, clanking his way through the pages of *Star-Spangled* in the most complex origin story to date. Scientists Bob Crane and Chuck Grayson are accosted by thugs one night while working in their lab. During the conflict, Crane is fatally shot.

With his dying breath he agrees to have Grayson transplant his brain into the skull of a robot they were developing. *"As Chuck operates the controls, a great electrical display bursts into being! Shafts of fire crash madly about the metal figure."* Suddenly the police arrive, arrest Grayson for murder, and leave the inert figure alone in the lab.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

The following morning, in a sequence right out of *Frankenstein* a shaft of light falls on the robot's ocular lens, fully waking him. Realizing what has happened, the man-robot goes to free his associate only to face a dozen frightened humans who drive him back to his laboratory sanctuary. *"I've got to disguise my appearance so that I actually look like a human being!"* he says, in a complete reversal of the super-hero code that demands they become bats, birds, insects, animals, fireballs and a warehouse of other nonhuman trivia.

He fashions a set of hands and a face mask, *"Now no one can suspect that I'm non-human...at least, I hope not!"* Calling himself Paul Dennis he visits the police station, revealing himself to Grayson who convinces him to find the real killers instead of breaking him out. Later, in another unusual story twist, he visits his own funeral and re-establishes a relationship (as Dennis) with his former girlfriend.

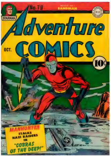
Through the underworld grapevine he tracks down the killers and forces them to confess. Without revealing his identity, Robotman has his friend Grayson released. *"While engaged in clearing your name, I discovered what a great deal of good I can accomplish in the world with this tremendously powerful metal body of mine. Chuck, the criminal element is going to hear a great deal more from Robotman!"*

For the next half dozen tales, Robotman countered crime with nerves of steel, got a new body and set about proving himself to be less robot and more man. The theme culminated in Robotman's version of the Binder Brothers *Trial Of Adam Link*. (Ironically, Otto Binder would write Robotman in the late 40's.)

In issue 15, Robotman was summoned to court for assault and battery charges against gang boss, Sam Slugg. *"Sooner or later the courts must decide whether or not I'm a human being. If I win this case, I can take my place in society again!"*

The trial began dramatically as Robotman willingly submitted to being chained and manacled before a courtroom divided with friends and enemies. Grayson testifies to the man's character, revealing his bizarre creation publicly. In an unusually sensitive scene, Crane's girl Joan Carter is overcome by tears at the shock of the revelation.

Slugg's shills take the stand and frame Robotman with false testimony. He replies, *"None of you has ever heard these lies about me before. But all of you have heard of the good I did, saving lives, smashing crime...I want to go on doing good-being human as my brain is human! Is a man less human with a wooden leg or a glass eye? Society needs my strength, my abilities, my trained scientific mind..."*



STARMAN
No. 79
SANDMAN
Adventure COMICS
OCT.
10¢
MANHUNTER STALKS NAZI RAIDERS IN "COBRAS OF THE DEEP!"

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub.Inc

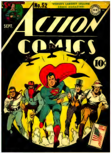
Suddenly, the ancient courtroom begins to collapse from the excess weight of the spectators. Bursting his chains, Robotman plays Atlas by bracing the walls until the building is evacuated and rushes the injured Slugg to the hospital. As he returns, the cheering throng declares him a hero, a citizen and a human being.

No one realized at the time that Robotman's tales forecast the future of man with considerable vision, much more, in fact, than Superman or Buck Rogers. The strip looked to the day of organ transplants and the psychological implications thereof. It asked what would happen when humans begin replacing broken bones with steel, old decaying organs for fresh plastic ones, ancient skin for new, and perhaps even artificial brain cells...WHERE DOES THE MAN END AND THE MACHINE BEGIN?

The early stories were handled seriously, some making considerable social comment. After a year the theme changed as the artists changed. Humor played an increasingly larger part. Robotman needed a foil to talk with and got it, a robot dog, Robbie. What was even more remarkable was the fact that Robbie could talk back. *"Here I am, Robotman!"* is all the little metal terrier could say in his first story. Robotman was pleased.

"I've always wanted a pet to cheer me up when I was lonely and, somehow, the ordinary type of dog wouldn't do! But Robbie's just perfect!"

During his first trip to town, the dog got scooped up by crooks into a bag of loot. Before the hoods got too far away, Robotman's microphonic ears picked up the plaintive cry, *"Here I am, Robotman!"* the pup's total vocabulary. Together, they made the thieves surrender.



No. 52
WORLD'S LARGEST SELLING COMIC MAGAZINE!
SEPT.
ACTION COMICS
10¢

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

The dialogue between the dog and his master was, and still is, the most amusing ever written in comics. Robbie's personality developed far beyond that of Robotman's. Appearing in alternating issues, the dog stole the show. Their verbal exchanges were reminiscent of the Edgar Bergen/Charlie McCarthy repartee. The dog could often be found reading his exploits in the newspapers to bolster his ego.

To his eternal dismay, Robbie also wore a civilian disguise, a hair suit. He was constantly reprimanded for speaking on the street. He'd sit up, scratch his head thoughtfully and say, *"Robotman, there's something strange! That man..."*

"QUIET!" Paul Dennis would scold at the incorrigible canine. *"Lucky no one was close enough to hear! But I told you not to talk...and don't call me Robotman while I'm wearing this disguise!"*

"I'm sorry, Ro...I mean, Paul! But this is so unexpected. I've got to tell you! It's about that postman! He doesn't smell like a postman!"

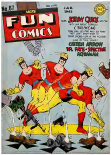
"Huh!?! Are you trying to be funny?"

"No, I mean it! He smells like a waiter, or somebody else who works in a restaurant! I think we ought to investigate! Wonder what you'd do without me, Robotman, and my ability to follow a scent!"

"Stop boasting...I didn't do so badly before you existed! Just make sure you don't lose that trail!"

The idea of a metal man and his irrepressible metal dog was brillant. If there was another hero strip in the history of comics that was half as prepossessing and charming, I never saw it. Once Robbie scattered parts of his own body to leave a trail Robotman could follow. It may sound strange, but their relationship was more believable than Batman and Robin's. Certainly more delightful. Marvel's Iron Man could learn quite a bit from his predecessor of 20 years.

Jerry Siegel wrote and Joe Shuster pencilled the initial Robotman stories, then turned the strip over to John Daly and Chuck Winter. In issue 28, Jimmy Thompson took over and tempered the man of metal with a new element, humor. His style looked like a combination of Jack Cole and Will Eisner. In fact, some of Thompson's work topped their's. His technique was backed by good solid drawing, rendered cleanly and precisely. The amount of design in his work is evident in the title lettering that he redrew every month, each a beautiful example of the typography of the times. He packaged his stories, doing the pencilling, inking and lettering himself. Thompson's unusually personal approach was the foundation that supported the characterization and humor on which the strip depended. Though he was only a filler and never a star, Robotman outlasted most of them. He hung up his oil can in December 1953, a long run for any mainspring.

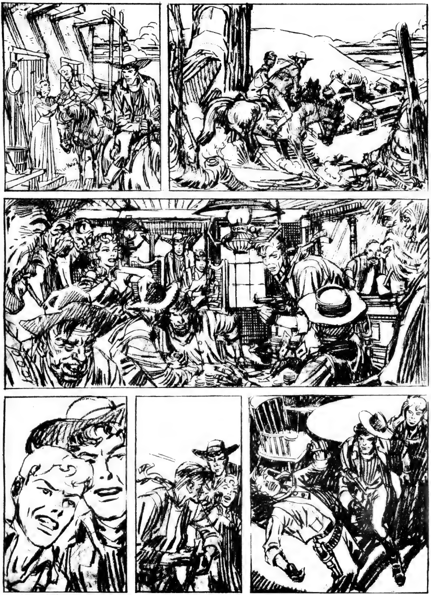


No. 87
TEN CENTS
MORE FUN COMICS
JAN. 1943
WHEN JOHNNY QUICK WITH HIS MAGIC FORMULA (3X2(9YZ)4A) HITS 'EM THEY FALL SO FAR AND SO FAST THEY CAN'T EVEN STAY IN THEIR SHOES—OR IN THE PICTURE!
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: GREEN ARROW DR. FATE • SPECTRE AQUAMAN

Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

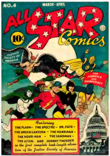
"There is no land beyond the law where tyrants rule with unshakeable power! It's a dream...from which the evil wake to face their fate...their terrifying hour!" the scrawl said. It was signed...THE SANDMAN.

In March 1942, Simon and Kirby dynamited the pages of *Adventure* 72 with explosive action, leaving bomb craters to mark their debut. Three issues earlier the old Sandman had doffed his street clothes and gas mask for a pair of



Beautiful example of a pencilled page by Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin form-fitting yellow and purple tights. In the bargain, he picked up a sidekick, Sandy Hawkins. They still sold the same goods; it's the pitch that was different.

The Sandman and Sandy haunted criminals with nightmares straight out of RKO's *Stranger On The Third Floor*. Insomnia was the only alternative to tales like *Dreams of Doom, Footprints In The Sands of Time, A Drama in Dreams, The Man Who Couldn't Sleep, The Unholy Dreams of Gentleman Jack, Prisoner of His Dreams, Sleep For Sale, Two Dreams to Destiny* and *The Sleepy Time Crimes*. *"Men call me the Sandman! I'm a dream of hope to the oppressed...but I'm a nightmare to the evil!"* he summed up.


NO.4
MARCH–APRIL
ALL STAR Comics
10¢
Justice Society of America
For America and Democracy
Featuring
THE FLASH – THE SPECTRE – DR. FATE – THE GREEN LANTERN – THE HAWKMAN – THE HOUR-MAN – THE SANDMAN – THE ATOM, AND JOHNNY THUNDER
in the first complete book-length adventure of the Justice Society of America

Copyright © 1941 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

Always a great movie fan, Jack Kirby often synthesized the finest in films into the crowning achievements in comics. In another issue of *Adventure* the essence of the classic 1932 thriller *The Most Dangerous Game* was blended with the super hero formula in Simon and Kirby's MANHUNTER.

It happened when wealthy sportsman Rick Nelson (changed to Paul Kirk later) threw a party for friends including police inspector Donavan. *"Why, think of me...out there in the jungles...there wasn't an animal too tough or too sly that I couldn't track down!"* Nelson stated. Donavan set him straight.

"Listen Rick! You're a nice boy and the world's best hunter!...But you're batting in a minor league! Yeah! I know! Lions and tigers are tough...but there is game more dangerous, cunning and treacherous than all the beasts you've hunted..and that's MAN!"

It was an intriguing thought, Nelson mused, *"If one can hunt the beasts of the jungle, why not the beasts of civilization?"*

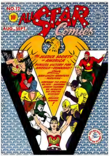
When Donavan is murdered, Nelson vows *"to take up the trail and track the killer down!"* The remaining five pages assaulted the reader with panel after panel of chaotic action. In his red and blue trimmed costume, Manhunter battled and battered a bevy of baddies until issue 80 when Kirby dropped him for THE BOY COMMANDOS.

Kirby had already initiated THE NEWSBOY LEGION and was pencilling a pile of pages daily. The late Ed Herron said Jack once produced as many as 9 pages a day. Stories were about 10 pages in length, 8 panels to a page (including a circular panel for variety, as if it was needed).

Kirby experimented with action and anatomy. No figure was too tough to draw, no position too outrageous. He knew more ways to throw a punch than John L. Sullivan. His virtuosity frequently overwhelmed a script's content. You liked it just because it was a Kirby story, and Kirby was synonmous with action. More than anyone else, he brought the "move" from the movies to the comic form.

"Oh, some play games for sky-high stakes,
and some play penny-ante...
But those who gamble with the law,
must pay the VIGILANTE!"

Greg Saunders, the prairie troubadour, rode into his first sunset in the January 1943 issue of *Action*. *"It all started on the Wyoming plains where I was born, sometime after my grandfather, a famous Indian fighter made his last stand...There was a real hero for you! Even his enemies respected him, and Dad carried on the fighting tradition. I can remember when I was only six or seven, Dad lived by the challenge-and-draw code of the plains...but years later when a shipment of gold came in from the gold mines, a cowardly shot from ambush made me an orphan! Called back from the east where I had already started in radio, I made a solemn vow..."*

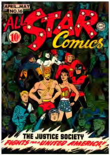


Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

Greg clenched his fist, *"I'm going to devote my life to smoking crooks out of their holes...like the old time vigilantes did!"*

A country and western radio show fronted his nocturnal activities. Instead of the usual steed, the crimebustin' cowboy traded in his hoss for a high-powered motorcycle; quite a relief to the reader who began to take the personal power of flight with a yawn. Vigilante bypassed the super stuff; his weapon was an old fashioned lariat that he wore over his shoulder. He was assisted first by old-timer Billy Gunn, then by Stuff, the Chinatown Kid.

Creator Mort Weisinger wrote the early stories at a feverish pulp pace. *"From across the western plains and into the streamlined east flashes a mystery rider symbolic of the spirit of frontier America...The Vigilante...heroic champion of law and order, who battles twentieth century criminals with weapons of the range in a ceaseless one-man stampede against all lawlessness! Follow the victory trail of The Vigilante as he rounds up public enemy number one with smoking six-guns and twirling lariat!"*



Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub Inc

His yarns were among DC's best. Weisinger, with consummate skill, wrote stories that had what was known as "middle action." Tales, usually 12 pages long, began where most others ended due to tight pulp plotting. Mort was one of the few in early comics to really savvy what it took to make a great story.

The Vigilante strip was most memorable though because it marked the debut of Mort Meskin at DC and contained much of his best work. Mort took what might otherwise have been just another middle-class hero series and transformed it into a strip of terrific visual literacy, one with genuine vitality and crackle. He replaced the grim romanticism of ordinary crime thrillers with rollicking adventure.

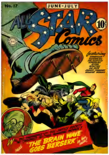
Meskin treated us with a new style, very un-Kirby, Kane or Shuster. He experimented, developed a new set of comic tricks and deplored the use of "stock shots". His breakdowns were stylishly tasteful, his splash panels often unforgettable. So what if Mort didn't know the construction of a .45 automatic, his gallery of expressive portraits more than made up for it.

He signed the stories "by Mort Morton, Jr. and Joe" or Cliff or Charley or George. His friends were inkers Joe Kubert, Cliff Young, Charley Paris and George Roussos.

Meskin was born in Brooklyn in 1916 and grew up under the influence of the pulps of the day. *"I never missed an issue of The Shadow,"* he candidly confessed. The work of Shadow artist Ed Cartier was his main inspiration. Others were Blue Book illustrator Herbert Morton Stoops, Austin Briggs, Raymond and Caniff.

After a 2 year stretch with a news syndicate, Mort teamed with Eisner to pioneer the first adventures of SHEENA, Queen of the Jungle in 1938. Then, at $5 a week, he joined the Chesler shop and met notables like Biro, Novick, Bob Wood and Ed Asch. Almost all of them quit to staff the drawing boards at MLJ, Meskin included. There, he found himself portraying the exploits of BOB PHANTOM, DOC STRONG, HERCULES and TY-GOR, Son of the Tiger.

In late 1941, he relocated at DC to lend a hand on a number of strips that included the Starman. Besides The Vigilante, Meskin began working on a second mile-a-minute hero, JOHNNY QUICK. In it, ace newsreel cameraman Johnny Chambers had only to say the miraculous formula, 3X2(9YZ)4A, to be transformed into the king of speed. He often raced along with his assistant, Tubby Watts, tucked comfortably under his arm.


No. 17
JUNE-JULY
ALL STAR Comics
10¢
"THE BRAIN WAVE GOES BERSERK" in this issue!

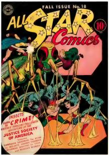
Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub.Inc.

Meskin's treatment was unique. During super-feats, Quick would appear in a single panel as a succession of single figures, fully rendered, not sketched as a series of speed lines that typified the old Flash or the strobe effect of the new Flash. Mort explained the concept, *"In order to indicate extreme motion, I drew Johnny Quick so that he seemed to be everywhere at once."* The approach was brilliant, a standout amid a society of less original speeders.

The cinematic look of comics was in its infancy. Eisner, Kirby, Kane and others made a careful study of film, translating what they could to the printed page. One film in particular seems to have served to educate the sensibilities of the comic coterie. *"Citizen Kane influenced us a great deal, all of us. We were very excited about it and* *spent quite a bit of time discussing it, employing its elements in our work. There was a contest as to who saw it the most,"* Meskin recalls.

Fred Ray won, he saw it 30 times. Mort chalked up a mere 15 viewings.

Meskin's legacy to comics is twofold. His work stands as one aspect. The other is his profound influence on others: Robinson, Kubert, Roussos, Ditko to name but a few. They, in turn, have and will continue to inspire new talent.



Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub Inc

Meskin teamed with Robinson later to draw Standard's BLACK TERROR and FIGHTING YANK, then GOLDEN LAD and ATOMAN for Spark Publications. They opened a little "shop" on 42nd Street and together turned out a number of masterpieces which competed with even Kirby's efforts. Jerry began teaching at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School with Mort standing in occasionally.

Next, Meskin went to work for Simon and Kirby, flooding *Black Magic* and the love books with his stories. *"I did a great deal of experimenting there; concepts, blacks and whites, continuity, trying to get different effects."* Six years later he was back at DC on the MARK MERLIN series. Today, he feeds ad agencies, TV and film storyboards not too different from the material he's produced for years. Except, perhaps, the costumes aren't quite the same.

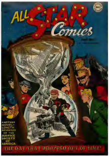
No analysis of style would be complete without mentioning artist Chad Grothkoph. Chad and his protege Alex Kotsky (their strips were signed Grotsky) collaborated on adventure fillers like CLIFF CROSBY and THE THREE ACES. Though Chad's early style was imitative of Sickles, he later developed the brilliant thick-and-thin line approach to rendering that broke through the traditional comic technique. His best work would appear later in humorous animated features.

There now existed almost two dozen new heroes in the All-American line, heroes with real variety, something for every taste. Yet the problem still remained. None of them could equal the popularity of DC headliners Superman and Batman. Owner Gaines summoned editor Shelly Mayer and top writer Gardner Fox to re-examine the questions and, hopefully, discover a solution.

Singly they simply didn't stack up to the man of steel or his cowled associate. Of course, together they...TOGETHER! OF COURSE!!

Gaines and his crew wrote another page in the history of comics that day. It was an epic concept, one that grouped the most popular heroes under a single title. The title was *All-Star*. The group, THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA.

All-Star 3 (Winter 1940) housed the first convocation of super heroes. Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Hourman, Sandman, Dr. Fate, Spectre and Atom became the charter members of comicdom's organized blockbuster.


ALL STAR Comics
ANOTHER NOVEL-LENGTH ADVENTURE OF THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA
THE DAY THAT DROPPED OUT OF TIME

Copyright © 1947 National Periodical Pub Inc

They assembled in the introductory chapter, were individually defeated by their adversaries in the next eight, and reconvened on the final episode to spell finis for their enemy. The lesson: united we stand, divided we fall. Odd that no characters ever fell on solo missions in their own books. Only when alone in *All-Star* were they beaten.

Others joined, quit, guest-starred and dropped out. Superman and Batman made their first appearance together here. The Black Canary, Dr. Mid-Nite, Johnny Thunder, Mr. Terrific, Scribbly the Red Tornado, The Sandman, Harlequin, Wildcat and Wonder Woman all lent their services at one time or another.

The regular artists for each of the participants in these imposing gatherings drew his own character's 5 or 6 page chapter. Ten or more artists might work on a single story. An epic concept indeed. And, best of all, it cost only a dime.

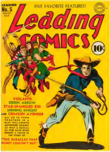
Plots were monumental. The Justice Society crushed spy rings, crime syndicates, famous villains from history and invasions from space. Members rocketed into the future, the past and to different planets to battle prejudice, intolerance and that all-time favorite, evil.

The JSA unrelentingly overcame Landor from the 25th century, the Psycho-Pirate, Solomon Grundy, the Alchemist, the Key and, in issue 37, their arch-rivals, the Injustice Gang of the World. The Gambler, Vandal Savage, the Wizard, Per Degaton and the Thinker united under the influence of the Brain Wave, the JSA's most-fought foe, to combat teamwork with teamwork. The Justice Society still triumphed.

The Wizard exploited the Fiddler, the Icicle, the Huntress and Sportsmaster in launching another unsuccessful assalt when the Injustice Gang met again in issue 41.

Many idealistic and highly sensitive stories appeared in *All-Star* as the JSA made food shipments to ravaged European countries and raised money for war orphans. They enlisted the aid of handicapped youngsters in the fight against crime and revealed the future to a dying boy.

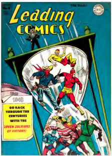
With issue 38 a more flexible format was introduced. Three or four chapters boasting 11 or 12 pages featured two or three man teams and occasional lone forays. Society members were still singly subjugated before massing a successful attack in the end.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodical Pub Inc

The JSA format was so successful that it prompted Ellsworth, Weisinger and Schiff to repeat it in the DC line-up. After a considerable amount of searching, they scraped together the Crimson Avenger, Green Arrow and Speedy, The Shining Knight, Star Spangled Kid and Stripsey and The Vigilante. They called themselves THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY (sometimes Law's legionaires) and hung their hats, caps, capes and masks in *Leading Comics* (Winter 1941), the place they called home. The partnership dissolved embarrassingly after 14 issues. The Justice Society they weren't.

Gardner Fox single-handedly scripted 7 years of JSA epics, a grand total of 35 books. Broome and Kanigher split the remaining 19 issues. The JSA was Fox's foremost achievement. Somehow, he managed to juggle a dozen characters in 9 chapters through a score of incidents in 50 or 60 pages and make it all come out even in the end. Fox described his writing habits, *"I rough out the story on long legal size sheets in pencil. I usually do that at night when it's quiet. I average about 3 pages an hour. Straight fiction I do maybe 4 pages an hour. My wife types my fiction. Thank god for that."*


Leading COMICS
GO BACK THROUGH THE CENTURIES WITH THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY!

Copyright © 1943 National Periodical Pub Inc

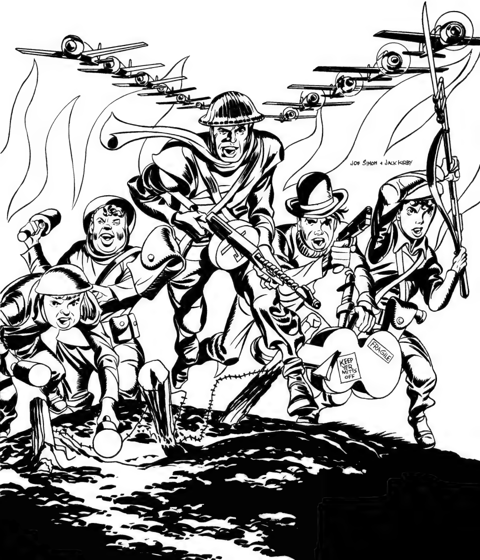
Unlike those who came into comics from the pulps, Fox reversed the procedure. His friend Julie Schwartz had convinced him to take the plunge and release a torrent of SF fantasies like *Temptress Of The Time Flow* and *Tonight The Stars Revolt*. As the pulps faded, Fox turned his attention to the paperback book field. His first, *The Borgia Blade* was a historical novel. But Fox proved to be a man for all seasons by producing crime, mainstream and sword and sorcery novels with equal dexterity. His *Warrior Of Llarn* and *Escape Across The Cosmos* are as fast paced and superficially entertaining as any in their genre. In 1969 Fox wrote 13 novels, bringing his total to an impressive 86.

His early comic output was equally prodigious. Yet it would be eclipsed by things yet to come. Fox in the 50's and 60's would be even more impressive.

Collectively, the DC and All-American groups represented the element of quality in comics during the opening decade of their history. While other companies began and folded titles with embarrassing regularity, the DC books ran on indeterminately. Their financial structure was the most secure, their distribution far better than the others. Yet it was the talents of the men that clustered around the DC logo that gave it its strength and thrust it into the unshakable position of number one.

It was these men, Siegel, Shuster, Finger, Kane, Weisinger, Gaines, Kubert, Burnley, Fox, Infantino, Schwartz, Meskin, Ellsworth, Toth, Mayer, Kirby, Robinson, Moldoff, Boring, Peter and their associates who deserve the credit.

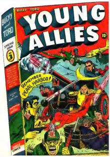
They are the real authors of the history of comics. ■


JOE SIMON & JACK KIRBY
KEEP YER MITTS OFF
FRAGILE

THE KID PLAYERS

From the depths of William Wyler's *Dead End* (1937) came to the Dead End Kids, scavenging, skirmishing and swaggering their way through five years of celluloid chaos before the comic book industry took notice and action. Films like *Crime School, Angels With Dirty Faces, They Made Me a Criminal, Hell's Kitchen, Little Tough Guys, Bowery Blitzkrieg, Mr. Wise Guy* and *Mob Town* all helped create a market for what would be a "boom" in the comic chronicle.

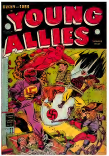
Notable as the comics first action "Kid Gang", Timely's YOUNG ALLIES (Summer 1941) was more super hero than street and sidewalk.



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

It starred Bucky Barnes and Toro, the youthful counterparts of Captain America and The Human Torch. The remaining Allies were right out of "Our Gang" comedies: Knuckles, Whitewash, Jeff and Tubby. Kirby looked at them long enough to pencil a few splash panels, then turned everything over to Don Rico, Al Gabriele and Mike Sekowsky, with Frank Giacoia inking. Otto Binder and Stan Lee scripted 20 issues and numerous guest shots in companion mags like *Kid Komics.* The Young Allies were really spin-offs of Cap's Sentinels of Liberty, the patriotic club that started with his own first issue.

In the first 6 issues Bucky and Toro heatedly battled it out for the title of leadership in much the same manner of the Sub-Mariner/Torch conflicts. Author Lee would exploit this approach 25 years later in his FF and Avenger's tales though he would somehow neglect to repeat the fire vs. water theme that gave the original stories so much punch.



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

Bucky finally emerged as the accepted leader of the Allies, even though a tone of animosity endured throughout the alliance. From their first appearance in which they faced the enmity of the Red Skull, the team's adventures continually thrust them into a running game of hide-and-seek with the most murderous of adversaries.

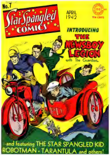
The books featured full-length tales usually divided into chapters of capture and escape material with the kids winding up as the victors. Captain America and the Torch occasionally lent their own excitement with a series of guest shots. Timely continued to apply the successful torture and terror tactics to the tales, especially on the covers.

THE TOUGH KID SQUAD (March 1942) was produced by the same crew and was considerably less distinguished than its predecessor. It bombed after one issue.

When Simon and Kirby left Timely for the DC ranks, it was only fitting that their new endeavors fit more into a framework of content and characterization than cyclonic sensationalism. Their forthcoming features were milestones in the history of comics.

Kirby's feeling for the kid gang strip came directly from his childhood. The turf of Hell's Kitchen they lived in, he had lived in. Street swagger and tough talk was an affectation he knew best.

"I spent all my early life drawing on the sidewalks of the lower East Side. In my kid strips I was only duplicating the atmosphere I knew. The city was my only experience. I tried to communicate its essence to those who weren't familiar with it. I knew all the kids in my comics; I'd grown up with them. I wore the baggy pants and the turtle neck sweaters myself." Kirby applied his knowledge in large measures and gave birth to another pair of classics.


No. 7
Star Spangled COMICS
APRIL 1942
TEN CENTS
INTRODUCING THE NEWSBOY LEGION
with The Guardian
—and featuring THE STAR SPANGLED KID ROBOTMAN · TARANTULA and others!

Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals

Using the films as background material, Kirby, with Simon, was the first to exploit the juvenile element so completely and convincingly on the comic page. With a cast of characters impossible not to identify with, the unwritten formula usually played the kids against the background of a city curiously like New York, teaming with hoods, con men, killers and various other unsavory individuals.

None of the gang members seemed to have any parents. Instead, they flocked under the closely hovering wing of a guardian angel, a father image always resembling a cross between Robert Taylor and Adonis.

THE NEWSBOY LEGION in the April 1942 issue of *Star Spangled Comics* initiated the real sidewalk and slum genre in the comics. Editors must have seen the handwriting on the wall, for they had the kids squeeze established super heroes out of the lead story position and off the cover for their almost 5 year life span.

The origin issue began, *"A wise judge once said...'There is no such thing as a bad boy!'"* With that precipitous phrase readers were plunged into Suicide Slum and the adventures of those marvelous kids, Tommy, Gabby, Scrapper and Big Words. Their attitude was strictly early *Amboy Dukes,* the fictional Hell's Angels of their day–the gang against society, society against the gang.

The biggest kid of all was Jim Harper, city patrolman by day and the crook-smashing GUARIDAN by night. Who can forget that thrilling moment when he stood like a masked god, his yellow shield in the shape of a policeman's badge held firm by one mighty arm, and prophetically proclaimed, *"Why, I'm a sort of...a...er...Guardian, I guess...yes, a Guardian of Society!"*

Saving the delinquent Newsboy Legion from a term in reform school, Harper had the kids released in his custody. They never knew Officer Harper and the crime-fighting Guardian were the same man but often suspected the truth, especially at the end of every story:

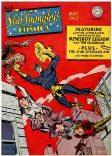
Big Words, *"Are you fellows thinking what I am?"*

Scrapper, *"Yeah! Didja see the tape on his chin?"*

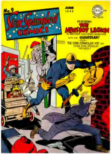
Gabby, *"The Guardian had a bruise in the same place!"*

Tommy, *"That's what I thought! I think we'll keep tabs on that cop from now on!"*

Every title elicits pulse-pounding visions of Simon and Kirby's incredible action scenes: *Last Mile Alley, The Newsboys and the Champ, Death Strikes a Bargain, Paradise Prison, The House Where Time Stood Still, The Education of Iron-Fist Gookin.* They



Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals



Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals

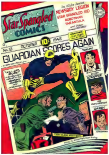
even tackled the Nazi peril in *The Fuehrer of Suicide Slum.*

A multitude of characters cavorted from page to page generating enough action to enthrall even the most hardened comic book reader. It all mirrored the confusion, disorder and turmoil of the times. America had been in the war for 3 years.

Exactly 3 months after the Newsboy Legion appeared, DC premiered their second kid gang series in *Detective* 64. Created for the sole purpose of battling the fascist menace, THE BOY COMMANDOS sprang like juggernauts into the enemy's midst. Under the watchful eye of Captain Rip Carter, the young freedom fighters cut a violent swath through spies, enemy soldiers, subversives and SS men like a gang of international street brawlers, which indeed they were.

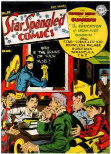
By some phenomenal coincidence each member of the group personally represented one of America's wartime allies. Alfy Twidget came from Great Britain, Andre from France, Jan from Holland. And who could typify America better than the irascible Brooklyn decked out in his green turtle-neck sweater and rakish crimson derby in the style set by Wallace Beery.

"Brooklyn's me name, see? An' dat's me mob, see? We're out ta get Hitler an his mob cuz dere ain't room fer both of us, see?" he swaggered in Cagney/Robinson rat-tat-tat dialogue from the splash panel. Together, the Commandos existed as a metaphor of the free world and its efforts to conquer Nazi terrorism.



Copyright © 1942 National Periodicals

An early Boy Commandos classic colorfully proclaimed from the splash panel, *"To most of us a book of history is dull...far from interesting. Yet for those men of whom it tells...those men whose deeds shape the destinies of all men...the world is an exciting place and its history, which they help to write, fraught with danger. Such a group of men are the Commandos, who at this very moment, are gallantly blazing across the bloodiest chapter in the annals of man...hoping to erase from its pages the memory of its foulest tyrants. This is a tale from history, past and present–of those who wrote it and those who live...it is not dull."*


No. 18
ten cents
Star Spangled COMICS
THE NEWSBOY LEGION WITH THE GUARDIAN
"The EDUCATION of IRON-FIST GOOKIN"
plus STAR-SPANGLED KID
PENNILESS PALMER
ROBOTMAN
TARANTULA
T.N.T.
MAR.
WHO IS THE BRAINS OF YOUR MOB?

Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

The following page introduced us to Nostradamus, 16th century prophet, in a sequence reminiscent of Korda's *Shape of Things To Come.* Years pass by in the form of huge stone numbers as a figure of a man gropes his way through the mist. When the scene clears we see the Court of Catherine, Queen of France.

She has summoned the seer to learn the fate of her country. *"France will know blood and glory, tyrants and statesmen, but none so infamous as he whom men will call the Dark Leader!... for he will conquer France, first with words, and then with weapons! Yes, there will be sad days for the people of France!"* he states as he hands the queen a sketch of Hitler.

He continues, *"Yet he too shall in turn be conquered...and his dark legions driven from France! Their ranks will be formed by warriors of many nations and they will attack like phantoms of the night!*

"There will be child warriors among them, innocents of great courage, who, led by a soldier from the new world across the sea, will write a glorious chapter in the annals of free men!

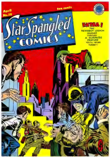
"They will come to France in armored ships..they will land in monstrous, fire-spewing machines...yea, even drop from the skies!" the prophet declares, robe fluttering in the wind, arms upraised like the man in the first panel. Sweeping across the sky from a point on the horizon are great silhouettes in the shape of bombers, reinforcing Nostradamus' vision of the future. The deafening roar of planes blots out his voice. CUT!!

The next wordless panel is drawn from behind the engine of a bomber with Commandos parachuting into space from the open hatchway, undoubtedly one of the greatest transitions in comic history.

The boys are training in England with Rip Carter putting them through their paces. His next order: they must attend school. *"War or no war, your school training is not going to be neglected!"*

"I'd radder be in de guard house!" Brooklyn protests in vain.

Their first day at school climaxes as Brooklyn gets spanked, and the team winds up soaked after a hazing by their classmates. Bathingham, the gardener, invites them to his house to dry off and, as you may have suspected, he's an Axis agent waiting for them to drop information. He discovers they have a mission and transmits the information to Germany where the Gestapo makes plans to trap them as their boats come ashore.



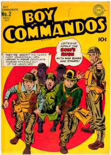
Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

Meanwhile, Marshall Goering has arrived to inspect a Nazi tank factory in occupied France. The machinists deplore his presence, *"If the British knew of Goering's visit, they'd come over in swarms! But no chance of that! The Gestapo conceals everything only too well!"*

Suddenly, " *'Listen! Do you hear that? It sounds like...it cannot be...it–it is! Planes!'* as if in answer to the *Frenchman's prayer, a loud cry echoes over the roar of the planes engines... THE COMMANDOS ARE COMING!*

"The main body of their troops guarding the beaches, the resistance of the Nazi force at the factory is rapidly broken as the Commandos sweep onward...wreaking death and destruction!"

Back in England the Commandos discover British intelligence agents learned about the traitor in time. He was an ex-professor who bore a grudge against his associates and his country. The tale ends as Brooklyn decides to take advantage of the situation. *"Y'ain't sending us back to dat school, are ya? Lookit de class o'people we meet!"*


BOY COMMANDOS
No. 2
SPRING ISSUE
BOY COMMANDOS
10¢
THEY'RE BACK! THE YEAR'S MOST SENSATIONAL NEW HEROES IN FOUR COMPLETE STORIES STRAIGHT OUT OF THE HEADLINES!
LET'S GIVE ADOLF THE BUM'S RUSH WITH WAR BONDS AND STAMPS!

Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

The Order of the Day, always tacked to the splash panel of each adventure, offered a clue to what lay ahead. The young comrades faced harrowing adversaries in *Satan Wears a Swastika, Invasion of Europe, Task Force to Tokyo, Message to Murmansk, Sand Dunes of Death, Thunder in China, Terror on the Yangtze, Return of Agent Axis, Swastika Over New York.*

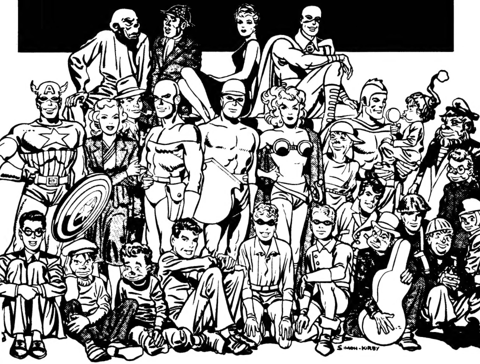
Sandman and Sandy, the Guardian and the Newsboy Legion, and the Boy Commandos all teamed up to spectacularly defeat the *Invasion of America* in *Detective* 76.

Though both groups were formed simultaneously by the same men, the Boy Commandos was the more incisive and direct of the two teams. Played against the background of a World War, their stories had a specific immediacy, their characterizations more credible and acutely drawn. Kirby's art was more sophisticated and stylish than ever before. *Detective* and *World's Finest* related the best of the Boy Commandos tales. By the year's end they had their own book.

It was during this period that Kirby developed the hypothesis that was to serve him for the next fifteen years. He evolved a personal formula of composition and perspective – an ingenious application of black abstract shapes that bisected and swirled across planes to give a durable illusion of dimension and depth. He applied this element of design most judiciously in the Boy Commandos.

He also established his building-block concept of architectural design, a concept which few others have been able to

Simon and Kirby letterhead – 1947

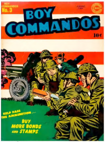

SIMON-KIRBY

grasp. Kirby's buildings (especially in the 60's) are masterpieces of form, of buttresses and ledges, of windows and walls; all superficial gingerbread composed to depict the city as it looks to him.

Unleashing his imagination, Kirby tightened up his storytelling and produced narratives drenched in fantasy and science fiction that involved the young heroes in Atlantis, at the sealed tombs of Egypt, the center of the Earth and even at the siege of Troy. The result was a *tour de force* that raised comic art to a new level.

The Boy Commandos were the most successful and popular of their overcrowded genre. They eventually took their final bows in August 1949, four years after the war ended, three years after most other groups disbanded.

Kirby, however, had long since left the command of his position at DC. He had tallied a total of 23 Newsboy Legion tales, the longest run of a continuing series he would chalk up in 25 years as a comic artist. Strange as it may seem Kirby's books either folded after a few issues or they became unusually successful after he had set the style and pace, only to go elsewhere. This time he was going farther than usual.

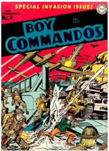


Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

"The comic field was producing heroes while the world at large came up with villains to match: Hitler, Tojo, Mussolini and the mess of miscreants stomping in their wake. Things got so bad during the period following Pearl Harbor that they finally drafted me. Then things got so bad in the Army, they actually used me in battle. At Metz, in France, serving in General Patton's Third Army, I was frozen into immobility by the sight of the advancing armor of the Heinrich Himmler Field Kitchen Panzers of the Waffen SS. I'd created another first – the Human Road Block. This won me a PFC stripe and a lot of colorful language from my First Sergeant.

"Well, the world just couldn't go on that way. The Axis powers, faced down by men raised side by side with superheroes, had had it. Everyone hustled out of uniform and began raising families."

Kirby would return from the war in time to cap the 40's kid gang era. Meanwhile a legion of hopeful imitators rushed in seeking similar glory and success. Predictably, few had any merit. Script-wise and otherwise none bypassed the power and imagination of Kirby's atmospheric art.



Copyright © 1943 National Periodicals

CAPTAIN FREEDOM AND THE YOUNG DEFENDERS, Lefty, Slim, Beanie and tomboy Joanie, appeared in Harvey's *Speed Comics* and probably came closest to the Cap/Sentinals format. Covers featuring Captain Freedom, Black Cat, Shock Gibson and the kids storming Nazi strongholds graphically duplicated the Timely formula. Schomburg, who did a number of Young Allies covers, repeated his success for both *Speed* and *All New*. Extravaganzas of complex action, machine guns, death rays and countless fighting figures, his covers alone were worth the price of the book.

Speed highlighted a story-behind-the-cover text feature that read like condensed pulp fiction. "*...But Captain Freedom reached forward quickly and, in the brief moment that meant life or death to the Black Cat, he seized her black-satin-garmented form before she could drop into the hideous acid. One yellow rat secured his tommy gun, but before he got to use it Lefty was on him like a flash. He twisted one of the Jap's arms backward into a hammerlock until he cracked the limb just below the elbow. Screaming, the Jap fell into a faint. Another Jap had run into a corridor to get his sub-machine gun, but just as he made ready to give Captain Freedom a burst of Jap lead, Joanie sent fifty bullets into his chest.*

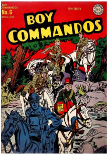
Joanie and Beanie had spotted a fixed machine gun in a crevice up on the wall, and, anticipating a Jap retaliation, thought it would be wise to cover the American's flank. It was wise! The Jap was dead before he hit the ground. One Jap lunged at Shock's (Gibson) unprotected back, but this effort also came to grief as Beanie let fly one of his largest stones smack into the bone behind the Nip's ear. With a low moan the fiend slumped over and then lay still. 'The only death list made out is going to be Japan's!' shouted Captain Freedom. 'After 'em!' cried the Black Cat, and the Americans roared out into the night on the trail of HIM. Read the next issue of Speed Comics and find out the true identity of HIM."

The Defenders' tales usually involved Captain Freedom rescuing them from enemy agents. They rescued him in alternating issues. Their companion book *All-New* starred THE BOY HEROES, another kid foursome.

RUSTY RYAN AND THE BOYVILLE BRIGADIERS by Paul Gustavson populated the pages of Quality's *Feature Comics.* Unlike most of the kid gangs they had super-outfits, replete with boots and red, white and blue tights. Dialogue was equally enthralling, *"It looks like time for a COMMANDO TRICK!"*

Judging by their costumes, THE FOUR COMRADES looked like they had the same tailor. Drawn by Maurice Gutwirth, they appeared in *Startling Comics* to combat axis villain Black Satan, Nedor's version of the Red Skull.

The same company produced the COMMANDO CUBS in *Thrilling Comics*, drawn by Bob Oksner. The five lads were inspired by watching commando training in England and split their efforts between war crime and civilian crime.

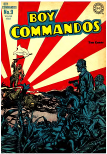


Copyright © 1944 National Periodicals

LITTLE BOY BLUE AND THE BLUE BOYS played their turn in DC's *Sensation Comics* for 7 years. Tommy Rogers took the lead and, supported by Tubby and Toughy, battled small town crooks to help the local DA who also happened to be Tommy's dad.

Issue 5 of *USA Comics* introduced THE VICTORY BOYS to Timely's line. They fought Hitler from Germany's Black Forest and embodied the most painfully atrocious art yet. They belonged in the Black Forest.

Harvey's GIRL COMMANDOS was an extention of the Pat Parker war nurse feature. Pat's compatriots, English, Chinese and Russian, clobbered their unladylike way through *Speed* and *All-New Comics.*



Copyright © 1944 National Periodicals

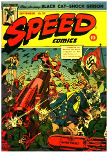
Spark Publications parlayed THE BOY CHAMPIONS in *Green Lama Comics* and THE KID WIZARDS in *Golden Lad* into another abortive attempt to crash and cash in on the kid gang treatment.

CAPTAIN COMMANDO AND THE BOY SOLDIERS were directly imititave of the Newsboy Legion strip. The Captain was their guiding light and led them through 24 tales featured in *Pep Comics.* Irv Novick and Sam Iger were among those who chronicled their adventures.

Headline Comics billed the adentures of the JUNIOR RANGERS and *Ranger Comics* headlined THE RANGERS OF FREEDOM. They were luckier than most – they were joined by RANGER GIRL. Who said crime fighting couldn't be fun?

Gleason Publications countered with YOUNG ROBINHOOD AND HIS BAND drawn by Alan Mandel, Dan Barry and others. Decked out in typical Sherwood forest-type garb, they appeared in *Boy Comics.*

Boy Comics also housed another kid gang. "LITTLE DYNAMITE AND HIS PALS *never look for trouble, but seldom avoid it,"* reads their splash caption. They were the comics' answer to the Bowery Boys.

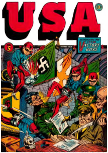


Copyright © 1944 Family Comics Inc.

One of the best and longest lasting kid gang strips rumbled under the name LITTLE WISE GUYS. From their introduction in *Daredevil* 13 dated October 1942, they ran to August 1956, taking over the book about halfway through their term. Like the Newsboy Legion they, too, were kept under the watchful eye of a super-type mother hen – in this case DAREDEVIL.

Their saga opens as orphanage kid Meatball runs away (who would adopt a kid named Meatball anyway?) and meets Scarecrow, as coincidence would have it, another orphan also running away. Meanwhile, the diminutive Pee Wee is saved from a beating by an intervening youth named Jock.

As fate would have it, they all meet later in a barn and resolve to stay together as a family of friends. With Tom Sawyerish dedication they pledge their loyalty and agree that, at last, they have established a worthwhile identity.



Copyright © 1942 Marvel Comics Group

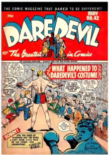
But the alliance is not yet completed. As they play in a field, a bull charges the group only to be felled by a deadly boomerang thrown, of course, by Daredevil. He just happened to be there.

It all sounds unlikely, even for comic book fare, but somehow, between caption and dialogue, it worked. The script was the work of Charles Biro, one of comics most adept influences. Biro's approach was one of naturalness and realism, quite a break from the usual formula writing. He wrote dialogue heavily but sincerely and imbued his stories with a kind of social conscience. Biro's straight, reverent treatments of comic matter often carried emotional implications far beyond the capacities of any other strip of the day.

His work stands as one of the few examples in the history of comics that certainly depended more on the author than the artist. Biro dominated the page with his words; the visuals became subordinate. And he often did the unexpected.

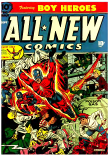
An early classic tale pitted the Little Wise Guys against a rival gang of delinquents called the Steamrollers. They had kidnapped Pee Wee and sent one of their own members, Curly, to infiltrate the Wise Guys.

Jock, Scarecrow and Meatball drew straws to determine who would rescue their hostage pal. Though Scarecrow is selected, Meatball takes his place and invades the enemy turf. Evading his antagonists, he is forced to hide in the frigid dark of an icy river which results in his death.


THE COMIC MAGAZINE THAT DARED TO BE DIFFERENT!
PDC
MAY
NO.42
DAREDEVIL
10¢ The Greatest in Comics
WHAT HAPPENED TO DAREDEVIL'S COSTUME ?!?
SORRY!
FOR THE SAKE OF SUSPENSE AND THE STORY, I CAN'T SHOW D.D.'S FACE ON THE COVER—YOU UNDERSTAND. CHARLES BIRO
Copyright © 1947 Lev Gleason Pub Inc.

The Wise Guys retaliate, rescue Pee Wee and rumble with the Steamrollers. Curly takes Meatball's place in the gang and affects a finale of old testament retribution.

Biro may have over verbalized, but his stories had guts. The drama came first. Few others, if any, would have killed off one of the strip's major characters. Biro broke through comic tradition and invented a new kind of drama, one he would establish even more so in his other books.



Copyright © 1944 Family Comics Inc

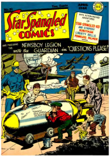
It seemed only fitting that Simon and Kirby should wind up the 40's kid gang era if only by virtue of the fact that they started it.

THE BOY EXPLORERS voyaged into the comic scene in May 1946, sailing under the Harvey colors. The strip was pencilled and inked by Kirby who was fresh out of the service, bursting with new enthusiasm and a whole new bag of tricks. Here was a Kirby that had only been hinted at before during lighter moments in more serious strips. Now he pulled all the stops and produced the most potent potpourri of pandemonium possible.

The strip was a classic of chaos that began by introducing Commodore Sinbad, last of the Yankee clipper captains, robust and red-bearded. The plot began in panel 3 as he opened his clothes closet, *"By Davy Jones' beard! It it ain't Gunga Jim!"* (use W.C. Field's voice for the Commodore).

The tall Indian tells Sinbad that a princess he once scorned is about to arrive and claim him for a husband. *"Sufferin' swordfish!! I'll swing from a yardarm afore I'll marry HER!!"* Sinbad vows. Gunga Jim suggests the adoption of children to prevent her plans, and they head for a nearby orphanage.

He arrives in time to see the kids skirmishing with the institution's matron, Miss Axehandle (the ultimate Margaret Hamilton type), and asks to adopt them. *"I've picked crews in my day, but you are the oddest collection I've seen yet! What are yer names, lads?"*


No.31
Ten Cents
APRIL 1944
DC
Star Spangled COMICS
WITH ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURES OF
STAR-SPANGLED KID AND STRIPESY
ROBOTMAN
LIBERTY BELLE
PENNILESS PALMER
AND FEATURING THE NEWSBOY LEGION with the GUARDIAN in "QUESTIONS PLEASE!"
Copyright © 1944 National Periodicals

"You ain't no rose garden, yerself, Beaver-puss! I'm Gashouse...an da microbe here is Mister Zero!", nods the tall lad with the baseball cap.

"Skidook!", confirms the tyke.

"Just call me Smiley!", the straight kid answers.

"I'm Gadget!", says the bespectacled boy.

The Commodore hoists Mister Zero. *"Shades of old horny!! I guess you don't add up to much...but Ol' Sinbad'll stake ya!"* muses the seaman as the kid belts him on the beak with an oversized lollipop.

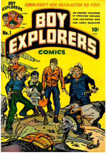
That night, on his way back from a midnight raid on the kitchen, Sinbad runs into one of Gadget's burglar alarms and the kids tear into him, thinking he's a burglar. Then, *"Hold it, fellas...we're shellakin' our new fodder!"*

Just as Sinbad prepares to wail the tar out of them, there's a knock on the door. *"Satan's Scorpions! She's here!"* says Sinbad, terrified. And he's right! Looking like an overgrown toad in a harem costume, she introduces her Grand Vizier, J. Edgar Ben Groover, who shatters the alibi built about a married man with kids.

A princess scorned, she demands, *"You shall pay for your rashness! You must duplicate the seven feats of Sindu San...or MEET MY EXECUTIONER!!"*

The orphans rally round him, *"You'll do'em and we'll help ya...we're yer kids now! We're gonna stick by ya.!!"*

The Commodore is ecstatic, *"Our first voyage is to a place called the End of the World!"* he hails as the story closes.


BOY EXPLORERS
SIMON-KIRBY'S NEW SMASH-ACTION KID STRIP!
THE GREATEST COLLECTION OF THRILLING FEATURES EVER JAM-PACKED INTO ONE COMIC MAGAZINE
No.1
10¢
BOY EXPLORERS COMICS
Copyright © 1946 Harvey Publications

The following page previewed the next cover with the Commodore and the kids searching through an underwater city. Teaser copy prophesied, *"Under the cover of night, the crew of the good ship Dauntless hoists sails, and moments later, she slips out of the harbor...into the unknown....!"*

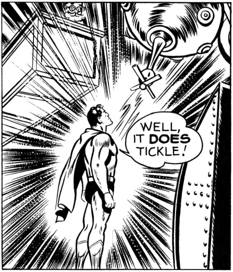
Precipitous words indeed, for *Boy Explorers* 2 was never to appear. Two other stories voyaged forth as fillers in other books but were unrelated thematically to the original statement. What obviously had the potential to become one of Kirby's greatest strips died before it could rightfully be born.

But the kid gang formula would emerge again and again. Kirby's BOY'S RANCH in the 50's and X-MEN in the super 60's would later be joined by the TEEN TITANS, DC'S version of the Young Allies. Charter members of the kid gangs undoubtedly view THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES with unabashed amusement: Superboy, Supergirl, Timber Wolf, Ultra Boy, Element Lad, Dream Girl, Matter-Eater Lad, Colossal Boy, Shrinking Violet, Saturn Girl, Princess Projecta, Karate Kid, Lightning Lad, Brainiac 5, Bouncing Boy, Duo Damsel, Invisible Kid, Chemical King, Phantom Girl, Shadow Lass. Their numbers run on and on.

The kid gang era belongs to the comics just as much as the super hero. Somewhat like child and father. One thing is certain: as long as there are kids, there will be kid gangs. Especially if Kirby has anything to say about it. ■

Creating an accurate, subjective analysis of the history of comics has been a labor of love. Others, beside myself, who have in one way or another contributed to the comic medium have also aided in the preparation of this book. I discussed the concept of the book with Stan Lee. By assignment, Ken Dixon wrote an outline based on my notes, conversations and assembled material; 28 of his pages were included in my original 296 page manuscript. Jerry DeFuccio read those pages, made any necessary corrections and added material from his own extensive knowledge of the subject. Dave Kaler double checked us both and polished a few final errors. For their suggestions and assistance on this project, we extend our gratitude to Dave Armstrong, Sandra Baker, Paul Bonner, Sylvan Byck, Bill Everett, Tom Fagan, Bill Finger, Gardner Fox, Gil Fox, Bill Gaines, Woody Gelman, Frank Giacoia, Chip Goodman, Martin Greim, Rich Hauser, Lynn Hickman, Dick Hoffman, Carmine Infantino, Jack Irwin, Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Mac MacGregor, Dale Manesis, Klaus Nordling, Jerry Robinson, George Roussos, Julie Schwartz, Carol Seuling, Phil Seuling, Ernest Toth, Bobby Van, Richard Weinberg and Mort Weisinger. And a very special thanks to Federico Fellini.

STERANKO


WELL, IT **DOES** TICKLE!

Wayne Boring Superman